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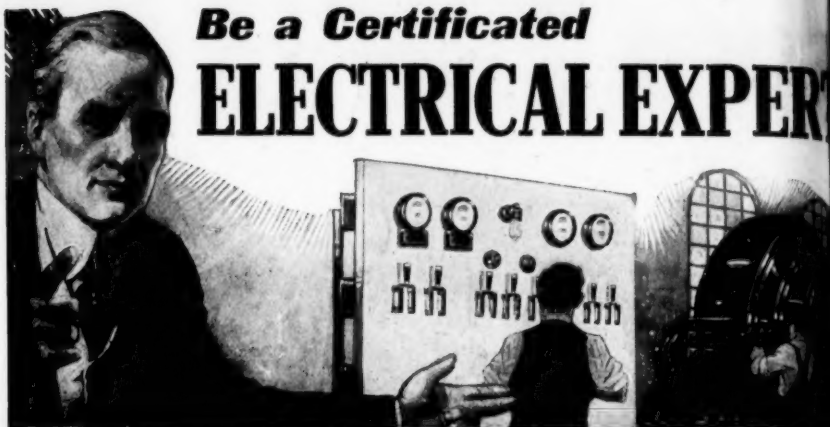
# INSLEES

THE MAGAZINE THAT ENTERTAINS

1921

ENTS





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August  
1921

# AINSLEE'S

THE MAGAZINE THAT ENTERTAINS

Vol. XLVII  
No. 6

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# AINSLIE'S

VOL. XLVII.

AUGUST, 1921.

No. 6.

## Seven Years

By Josephine A. Meyer

Author of "The God of Fools," "Her Own Kind," "The Sin of the Saintly," etc.



### CHAPTER I.

**T**HORPE lay watching the sea as it crept up the hard white sand. The sound of it filled his ears with a pulsating rise and fall in tune with the thoughts which crowded his brain, a purposeless, absorbing, meaningless sound, just as his mind was busy with matters which were intelligible only to his heart. He was not listening to the sea nor was he really looking at it. He was strung up to that tensi-ty of apperception that made it possible for him to sense the approach of some one across the noiseless sand behind him without the use of eyes or ears.

He was in the state of mind where he would have said only the advent of one woman could have electrified him into attention just then. As a matter of fact, expectation of her coming, in particular, keyed him up to an indiscriminate though sharp perceptivity of the advance toward him of any one at all. He straightened up, thrilled and joyous, to meet—a disappointment.

He saw a dark face, sunburned in rich tones under the wisps of wind-tossed black hair, a face as downcast and sullen as his own, with a round red mouth drooping disconsolately.

"Hello, Olive," he grunted, scoring another black mark against his already besmirched self-esteem.

"Oh, Syd! Hello!" Olive glanced at him listlessly from under the fringe of her startlingly gray eyes.

"What's the matter?"

"Nothing."

"Don coming out soon?"

"I guess so."

"You're not your brother's keeper, eh?" Thorpe tried to keep his voice pleasant, but Olive irritated him. At first he had found her adolescent devotion to church matters—especially the matter of the attractive young curate—amusing, being, as he knew, so typical of her age. He liked probing her seventeen-year-old soul with its avowed passion for social service, because his recognition of this sublimation of sentimentality gave him a feeling of scientific superiority, gratifying to his own scant twenty-four years. His interest had lasted while he was able to maintain over her the impersonal advantage of a professor examining a slide. But lately he had put a new smear under his mental microscope, the more thrilling specimen of his own apparently ungovernable personality, and Olive was perforce discarded. Therefore it

annoyed him that, as her brother's guest, he had to continue to show a courteous consciousness of her existence.

She now flashed him an angry look which gave her eyes a steely, mature appearance.

"That's irreverent," she chided sharply, and moved away.

He did not call her back, though the satisfaction of seeing her go was damaged by the realization of his boorishness. He did not regret hurting her feelings so much as having exhibited the state of his own mind to this raw kid. He stared after her rather tall, straight, awkward figure in its carelessly unbecoming bathing suit, too long and too full, and the heavy, ugly stockings which prudishly disfigured her legs.

In the nature of things he contrasted her with the image which had occupied his thoughts so completely before her intrusion.

"Good heavens, does she think that will win her curate?" he mused ill-naturedly. "And will it? Why don't they make virtue a bit more beautiful? Then perhaps sin would have less of a show."

Olive dived determinedly into a shallow breaker and, more attenuated than ever, walked out toward the horizon until the water was deep enough to swim in. She, unlike her brother, Donald, swam well, too well. What was against her asking to be allowed to trail along with Thorpe and Gladys?

"I'll tell her one girl at a time is all I can manage," he thought, enjoying his own indignation and his prospective snubbing of her in advance.

The sweetness of several flower gardens suddenly perfumed the air about him as some one dropped down upon the sand near by.

"Watching Olive?" asked a musical voice softly, before he could catch his breath. "She's well worth it—in the water."

He did not answer with his lips, but his eyes gave her no room for doubting the object of his most delighted observation. She averted her eyes with a consciousness worth the softest of answering looks. Her lovely, curly brown hair lay neat and demure under her scarlet cap. Her eyes were hazel, her skin fair, and her fine, sensitive mouth and nostrils quivered under his scrutiny as her color rose. He impulsively placed one of his long, bony brown hands over her slim fingers so near him on the sand. She did not draw away, but looked up at him, all her coyness gone, faded into an honest apprehension.

"Don't, Syd; please don't!" she whispered painfully.

He withdrew his hand.

"And don't look at me like that."

"Gladys," he said softly, "I can't help it."

"You must. I am engaged to Donald."

"To-day that statement seems to have lost its potency, though it worked so strongly on us both last night. The dark scares people into all sorts of concessions. Gladys, I love you."

"Hush!" She rose quickly and, with her hands over her ears, fled swiftly down the beach to the sea. A glance over her shoulder toward the shore and the bathhouses, and not at all toward Thorpe told him of her sincerity as well as of the struggle she was undergoing. She had looked back for Donald in hope and in dread. Well, he would not pursue her, but later he and she would outswim Donald. He stood up. It was a surprise to him that Donald was not yet in sight.

In the end the swim was unsatisfactory. Gladys was not a reader of Meredith, and Thorpe lacked the courage to attempt to suggest or explain the submarine adventure so spontaneous with *Matey Weyburn* and *Lord Ormont*

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and his *Aminta*. So they swam in silence, thinking of their tragedy.

"If it had been any one except Donald!" was Thorpe's heart cry.

Donald Hamilton had been his chum all through college. They had been closer than brothers. It was this very intimacy which had led Donald to invite his friend to come out here to the seashore to meet his fiancée. Perhaps it was their spiritual kinship, the shaping of all their thoughts and desires in the light of each other's criticisms, that made it inevitable that the girl chosen by one should seem desirable to both. In matters of the heart men have been betrayed from time immemorial by their bosom friends.

Until yesterday he felt he could love Gladys with the humble, honest, pure devotion due Donald's wife. But once she had manifested any feeling for him other than sisterly, he knew the truth. They had been alone in the garden for a moment the night before and both, trembling, had felt the pressure of the hand of fate. They had obeyed it. Yes, if he had kissed her, she had kissed him. Then she had recalled him with the mention of her troth to Donald. It frightened him to think how the magic of this spell was wearing off.

Donald swam out beyond his depth to meet them. His face was drawn and pale with exertion, and not a little from timidity. He had no self-confidence in deep water. He looked as if he were preoccupied with the risk he was taking and he had no spare breath to answer their blithe greeting. He was relieved to turn and swim inshore with them.

Poor Donald! Thorpe was assailed with the disgust of pity. Did Gladys see Donald as he saw him, that lean, blue-lipped, frightened face, the thin uncertain arms which beat the water in the ungainly feeble stroke so different from their own easy, rhythmic swimming? He dared not meet Gladys' eye.

As soon as possible Donald touched bottom and began to walk shoreward, panting laboriously. Gladys and Thorpe shot ahead.

"You had better go back to him," said Gladys quickly. "He may need help. I'm going in to dress. I'm cold."

The intimacy of her tone of command smote him anew with that pleasurable pain, that strange mixture of both pride and shame she had the power to evoke in him. He dropped into a walk and turned back.

Donald, chest-deep in the surging water, was gazing out toward the horizon, and Thorpe's first guilty thought was that he had been unable to bear the sight of Gladys' defection.

"What's up?" he called.

"Olive's out pretty far," answered Don, without turning around.

"She's a good swimmer," reassured Thorpe carelessly, but when he finally was able to sight the black speck which was her head on that vast expanse of water, he was astonished to note what a distance out she had managed to get. "Want me to go after her?" he asked.

"I can't see which way she's headed, can you?" said Don uneasily. "You see," he added with a dark flush, "she's—she's been up against it. Her little curate's engaged. She's just heard it. She told me about it up at the bathhouse. And from her manner I could see she was pretty darn stuck on that dolly little simp."

"Why, Don," Thorpe protested with a laugh, "you don't really believe that Olive—that kid——"

"We Hamiltons, even at her age, take our love affairs mighty seriously," said Donald slowly. The flush was still on his thin face, and now his eyes met those of Thorpe unwaveringly.

"He's noticed!" was Thorpe's mental ejaculation. The thought gave him physical discomfort, not unlike the throb of a bad headache. "I'd better

go after her," he said casually, and instantly started to swim out.

It was evident that Olive was having a hard time getting back, but when he was near enough to hail her and inquire if she needed any help, she shook her head with a frown. This natural bit of obstinacy roused him to disproportionate impatience. He had half a mind to take her at her word and go off and leave her, but, recognizing some symptoms of exhaustion in her, he decided to stay near her.

"You'd better float for a while and rest," he advised her, after a bit. She either did not hear or had no intention of heeding him, and struck out doggedly with decreasing power. "Little fool," he muttered and was not half so alarmed as he was angry when, a few minutes later, she suddenly turned deadly white, threw up her arms, and sank. "You deserve a good ducking," he thought indignantly as he went down after her. He brought her up and prepared himself for a struggle, but she lay quite limp, half fainting, in his arms. He trod water until she had somewhat recovered herself.

"That was a sensible stunt, wasn't it?" he scolded. "You might have had us both done for. If I'd told you to go on swimming maybe you'd have rested. Is that it?"

"You didn't need to save me," answered Gladys sulkily.

"No? All right, shall I let you go now?"

"I'm not afraid."

"Then you ought to be. Can I trust you to hang on to the shoulder of my bathing suit while I swim in, without your throttling me or letting go? I don't want to have to dive for you again."

"Go ahead."

"If you feel faint or anything, pound or pinch me."

"All right."

"And for Heaven's sake no more foolishness!"

She made no reply to this, but he felt the grip of her fingers on his suit. She was no trouble and practically no weight to tow in. When they were in shallow water, he reached out for her hand to pull her through the last of the breakers, and he was surprised to see how docilely she obeyed his gesture.

"I'm all right now," she said at last. "I guess you saved my life."

"You didn't seem so darn grateful at the thought a while ago," he grunted.

"I wasn't," she said darkly.

"What were you trying to do out there, anyway? Chase submarines, or whales or what?" he asked lightly, fearing further confidences.

"Nothing. I'm going up to dress. Thanks for what you did." She held out her slim wet paw again, with averted face.

"Nonsense, I didn't do a thing." He took her hand carelessly and dropped it and then saw a peculiar, twisted smile on her face.

"I guess that's right," she said bitterly and scampered up the beach.

"Seventeen," mused Thorpe. "Bah! She thinks she knows what heartache is, I suppose!"

With lagging steps he approached Don, who was sitting, bent dejectedly over his crooked-up knees, smoking cigarettes.

"She was all right, just a bit tired," he reported.

"Looked to me as if you had to give her a lot of help," answered Don, without animation. "What was she trying to do? Drown herself?" he added with a keen look.

Thorpe laughed deprecatingly.

"Seemed like it, didn't it?" he said jestingly, hoping this would not lead to any more remarks about the way the Hamiltons took their love.

Conversation faltered and died between them. It was as if their friend-

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ship, a moment before a fine and flourishing tree, had become blighted and was withering. The one thing inevitably closest to both of them seemed incapable of being mentioned by either. Thorpe saw himself entirely the offender, the faithless, the betrayer. Though he hated himself in this rôle, he hated worse the idea that this man, above all others, was privileged to see him and despise him for what he was.

"I've got to go back to town to-morrow," he began after a silence. Without moving or altering the blank expression of his countenance, without, so to speak, turning a hair, Donald not only registered but radiated satisfaction at this statement. However, he made some perfunctory objection.

"You never told me you had to go. I thought you were to stay over until Monday," he remarked.

"I find I can't," answered Thorpe rather shortly.

"You know your own business best," shrugged Don.

To both this seemed an incredible termination of their visit, of their friendship. For both were fully aware of all this stilted dialogue foreshadowed.

## CHAPTER II

Thorpe saw her coming down the street and noted her swift, frightened glances to right and left. He hated the very word "furtive," yet, applying it to Gladys in this instance thrilled him immeasurably. She was lowering herself in her own estimation for his sake. She was coming to him in answer to a note he had sent her the day he had left Donald's, begging her to meet him at this time and place. While not asking her to reply, he had given her ample time to do so, and, not hearing from her, he had not known till this moment that her answer would be to come.

It was an innocent enough tryst in a highly respectable setting, a quiet tea

room where they could talk in comparative privacy at this hour between the rush of lunch and tea.

Her glance showed she did not know the place; but when she met his eye, it also showed her complete trust in him, for the color which mounted to her clear young skin was the crimson of pleasure which matched the smile on her lips and in her eyes. He was to remember her for many years as she came toward him then, dressed in softly fluttering black foulard, patterned with a small white figure and made youthful by the extent of filmy white about the neck. Her hat was a large black straw on which was wound a long feather shading from amber, through the tones of orange to deep terra cotta. A magnificent, all-conquering plume, he thought.

"I'm glad you came," he said simply, taking her hand.

"I had to, Syd. Is this the place?" Another of those timid glances showed she was anxious to get to cover. A great tenderness welled up in him at the sight of this, and he had an uncontrollable desire to take her in his arms, to hide her that way if need be. He compromised with himself by slipping his hand under her elbow and felt her instantly draw close to him with both confidence and affection. He glowed warmly. All doubt he, too, may have had at the impropriety of this secret meeting with his friend's betrothed vanished in the clear realization that they belonged together, were made for one another because of their love. Their only wrongdoing was in not proclaiming their rights, and this could soon be remedied. So eager was he to resort instantly to this policy of frankness that he experienced a little shock of disapproval when she indicated her desire to take one of the secluded tables in the back of the shop.

"We'll want to talk quietly," she said in explanation.



"Gladys, dear," he said when the waitress had taken their order and gone, "we are doing nothing wrong except feeling ashamed."

"Of course we are not," she protested quickly. "But that will not keep us from being misjudged if we are seen." Then she leaned across the table and placed her hand in his, and he saw there were tears in her big, tender eyes. "Syd, whoever is to suffer," she said earnestly, "it must not be Don."

This was the first hint he had got of her intention to sacrifice to duty. Unconsciously he raised his eyes to the feather on her hat, as if it had been aware of its own symbolism and had purposely misled him. He took courage from its decisive color, clear and characteristic of victory, even in the obscure shadows of the room.

"Don won't suffer," he declared.

"Do you believe that, really?"

"Well, not for long. Naturally he loves you, every one must. But only one man can marry you. I'm that man, for I never could look at another girl, now that I have seen you."

She clutched his hand tighter, then her head drooped and her eyes were hidden.

"He spoke like that, too. Syd, he said the Hamiltons— Did you know even that silly little Olive tried to drown herself for—for love?"

"A hysterical child! When she saw what she was doing she was glad enough to be rescued," retorted Thorpe.

"Don's grandfather killed himself when he found he was in love with some one besides his wife. And an aunt of his—"

"Gladys, this is childish!" interrupted Thorpe impatiently.

"It may seem so to you, for you didn't see Don's face," reproved Gladys.

"Yes, I did. He pulled some of the same stuff on me."

"Please don't, Syd. That hurts me.

Oh, can't you see this is no time to be flippant? Syd, do you know why I came to-day?"

"I thought I did."

"Don't look at me that way! Syd, I came to say good-by to you. We must never see each other again."

"That's ridiculous!" he exclaimed, growing white.

"Please, Syd!" Her tears brimmed over, and he had to release her hand so that she might lift her veil and wipe them away. Letting go of her physically gave him the sense of having lost hold of her spiritually as well.

"Don't you see," she said in a low, musical voice, keeping her hands on her side of the table well out of his reach, "we did wrong? We are the ones who must suffer for it."

"What wrong did we do?"

"Oh, Syd! You were his best friend."

"Do you love him or me?" he demanded fiercely, out of patience with her, his eyes blazing. She recoiled with a terrified look about her.

"Don't! Some one will notice! You should never have come into my life. Why did he bring you?"

"Don or no Don, we would have met. Perhaps that is part of his destiny as my friend—that he introduce us. Dear, think how fortunate we are that this has happened before you married him."

"Fortunate? I have sworn before Heaven I will marry him. I cannot break my vows. Oh, say you understand, Syd. It is for our sake, for all our sakes. Just think, he would be losing us both at one blow, and if he should—oh, don't underestimate the likelihood!—if he should—even just because he thought the Hamiltons act like that—we'd never be able to raise our heads again. Think what it would mean. Ostracism besides guilt. We couldn't stand it. I've made up my mind. Don't try to move me, Syd. You'd help me, if you really loved me."



In the semidarkness of the rear of that converted drawing-room, surrounded by little white-covered tables, enameled walls, fresh and freakish wall paper, the subdued presence of waitresses, and two remote strangers making businesslike late lunches near the window, this whole affair seemed unreal and unmanageable. Thorpe's first and deepest wish was that he had not chosen a tea room for this discussion. The wish was intensified by the return of their waitress with the tea service which she proceeded to distribute deftly between them, like a prestidigitator handling cards. It descended upon them like the sudden rattle of a hailstorm on a still summer day, a disturbance and a noise. At last she withdrew, and Gladys poured the tea with a mechanical, hopeless gesture, pushing the cream jug and sugar bowl toward Thorpe, instinctively saving herself the anticlimax of asking him questions concerning them. Thorpe disliked taking his tea black, but on the present occasion he proved his youth by disdaining to ameliorate its bitterness by the consideration of practical details. A gulp or two at the stinging hot draft had the reverse of a soothing effect on him.

"Gladys," he said desperately, shoving the teacup from him with a savage gesture, "we are making a most horrible mistake. It is not fair to Don to go on with this lie."

"It won't be a lie," said Gladys tremulously.

"You mean you think you can stop loving me?" demanded Thorpe, horrified at the idea that she could conceive of this.

"No—no! At least— Oh, what can I do? We mustn't think of love. That's out of both our lives now. I shall do everything for Don. I shall devote myself to making him happy and shall make up for the wrong I've done him."

"You haven't done him any wrong yet."

"How can you say that! I have always believed so highly in men's honor and friendship. Don't be the one to disillusion me. I could not bear that! Do you know what I was thinking of last night—what it was that really made me make up my mind to do the right thing? It was this: Sydney Thorpe is the one man in a million whom it is possible to love and renounce. I shall be better for having known you, dear. It is because you are so fine that we can together prevent this tragedy. Oh, betrayed friendship is so sordid! People are always ready to treat it so—so cynically."

"What does it matter how people treat it? We can't help loving each other. Let us acknowledge it openly," he begged.

"No, no; this must be the last time we acknowledge it. We must conquer it. We must turn it into friendship so we can look squarely and honestly into the eyes of the world, into Don's eyes, into the eyes of your wife."

"My what?" exploded Thorpe almost comically.

"Oh, I do want you to marry, Sydney! Really I do," pleaded Gladys in a low voice which openly belied her.

"No," his quivering hands stumbled aimlessly among the chinaware before him, while with difficulty he repressed his tendency to smash it. He felt revolted, insulted, and indignant. He wanted to seize Gladys in his aching arms and kiss her violently, to awaken her to the folly of her words. His face was drawn and pallid. "Gladys," he said harshly, "you haven't the slightest idea what love is!"

"Syd!" she protested tearfully.

"It's true. Yes, we'll renounce each other as you call it. You could not be happy with me. Perhaps," he added more gently, "women are like that, the best of them. I can see it is fine in you

and very beautiful. I have no right to think it cold or to try to influence you. Oh, but I want you, Gladys! Without you life will be meaningless. If only you felt that way, less like an angel, more like me."

"I do," she whispered. "Life will be all that——"

"Then why——"

"Because we must. I promised. I promised him again last night. I vowed. I must. Dear, dear Syd, we'll be happier if we do right."

"That's what I believe. Where we disagree is: what is right?"

"There can be no doubt."

"That is what I think."

"You think it could be right to harm your friend?"

"And you dare dream it could be right to harm your love?"

"I cannot listen to you. Oh, it is wrong of you to try to persuade me. We have only our own consciences to judge by. Mine tells me what I must do. I cannot stay with you any longer." She looked about her restlessly. "We'll say good-by here, now."

The thought both relieved and stabbed him. He could not bear much more, yet neither could he let her go like this, with so many things still unsaid. He burned with a desire to wake her, to write passion upon the blank whiteness of her too-exalted soul. He took her hand, and she did not struggle, but let it lie hopelessly cool and still in his grasp.

"I love you," he said softly. "Promise me one thing."

"What?" she asked tonelessly.

"Give me my chance to win you."

"No, that isn't possible."

"Do not marry for at least a year."

She drew her hand away sharply.

"I am marrying Don on the fifteenth of next month. I promised him that last night."

"Break your promise then!"

"Sydney, Sydney, you are not the man I thought you!"

"And you are not the woman, yet, God help me, I love you more than ever, Gladys. Come with me now and let us be married. Come, forget everything but that!"

He held her startled eyes hypnotized for a moment or two, then she pushed back her chair and tremblingly gathered up her gloves and bag. He was not sure she was not about to obey his wild command and rose exultantly with her.

A watchful attendant bustled up at the sight of their departure, and Gladys, seeing this, took the situation in hand.

"It was so nice, Syd," she chattered conventionally. "Thank you so much. Good-by."

"But, Gladys," he protested, stunned by her amazing transformation.

"I'm sorry we are not to see each other again," she pursued evenly. "But you may trust me to hold to my decision." And with a quick little bow and a mirthless smile she turned and was gone.

### CHAPTER III.

One clear frosty day in the beginning of March, seven years later, Sydney Thorpe hailed a bus on lower Fifth Avenue and climbed up the narrow, curving steps to join the only three other passengers who dared to sit on top. Seven years had made some difference in his appearance. He had been gawky at twenty-four, before he had finished putting on the extra flesh which went with his six-foot frame. His face was now deeply bronzed and seemed ruddy in contrast to the faces of the city dwellers about him. There were lines about his observant, dark eyes, and people were not sure whether his close-cropped, mouse-colored hair was gray or merely blond.

He had left New York shortly after the disappointment of his hopes of

Gladys Perry. The engineering firm for which he had worked had offered him an opportunity in South America, and he had seized it and made good. On this job he had become acquainted with a young Englishman, through whose influence, two years later, he had gone to Europe to have a hand in the war. His friend had been sacrificed at Gallipoli. He himself, as an engineer, had seen action, but had come through four years of horror and adventure unscathed. He had intended remaining abroad to help rebuild and reconstruct, but he had been suddenly sent for by a law firm in the States to receive a large, unexpected inheritance from an obscure relative. This fortune, added to the means he already possessed, made him, in his modest estimation at least, needlessly rich. It struck him as ironic that people who wanted money had to struggle for it, while he, to whom it meant nothing, had it showered upon him, unasked.

He still thought he would never marry. He hugged the sharp cruelty of his unsuccessful love affair to his heart and professed to believe that the best of his life had terminated with it. It was this idea that had sent him into the maelstrom in Europe, and had turned him out of it apt to boast of his placid, elderly impassivity.

How much truth there was behind this boast could have been detected by any one with the power to observe the inmost workings of his mind that day in March when he mounted to the top of the bus and caught sight of a large black beaver hat trimmed with a plume which shaded from amber through burnt orange into deep terra cotta. He went toward it fascinated, impelled by an attraction as mechanical as that of the flame for the moth. He took a seat directly behind the apparition and tortured himself sweetly with memories of the past and speculation as to the present, for he could not see the

face under the wide brim, nor the hair, nor much besides the straight and slender shoulders bent a little forward in the wind. He imagined a faint, unforgettable fragrance blew upon him from the feather, and the idea made him rather dizzy, so strong was his sense of loss, so unmitigated the sting of it after all these crowded years.

"I guess Europe is the safest place for me even yet," he mused, and enjoyed his own heartache, for there is satisfaction in discovering one's emotions undamaged by the lapse of time.

One of those swift, freakish winds, which spring up suddenly in the midst of a lull, took the feather and the hat to which it was attached, lifted them neatly out of reach of the startled wearer's tardy fingers, and flung them straight at Thorpe's broad chest. It was as disconcerting as though the plume had heard the call of his heart and had been unable to forbear jumping into his arms.

"Oh, my hat!" cried its owner in dismay, and turned swiftly.

It was not Gladys, but she had an uncanny power to suggest her.

From the look on the girl's face Thorpe realized he had been staring rudely as he restored her property.

"Thanks," she said uncertainly. "It's so big. I had no right to wear it up here—that is—well, thanks."

She resumed her former position with her relentless back toward him, and drew the hat down rather savagely low on her brow, clinging to it determinedly. He had evidently badly flustered her.

"Serves her right," he frowned to himself. "Maybe she didn't give me a stitch, too! Wearing a feather like that!"

And there was something about her face. He could see her profile now and again. She seemed apt to turn it more than necessary. Each time she did so the memory of Gladys' profile

became more distinct to him. It was not a bit like this and yet—damn that feather!

Then he caught her eye, and she turned full around.

"Excuse me," she blurted out awkwardly, her face crimson. "Is your name Sydney Thorpe?"

"What indiscretion!" he thought. "Yes," responded he aloud.

"I'm Don Hamilton's sister," she prompted.

"Olive."

"You remember my name?"

"I ought to have remembered your face."

"Why? You only saw me that once, the summer we were at Meremead. And I was a child," she exclaimed.

"Child nothing! You were seventeen and desperately in love. May I sit next to you?" He was not particularly sure this was the right thing for a man who felt the necessity of dwelling in the opposite hemisphere from that inhabited by Don's wife. But his hunger to hear of his old love was desperate. Olive flashed him a smile, gleaming white teeth and gleaming gray eyes. How could he have forgotten her eyes, so like Don's and yet so oddly characteristic of her? He moved forward to her seat and looked her over frankly.

"I don't remember you as so good looking," she declared critically.

"Same to you," he retorted, smiling.

"Oh, but that's different! You were my hero for a while."

"I? Good heavens, no! You forget. It was that parson fellow."

"You took his place," she answered easily with a humorous lift to one eyebrow, a trick of hers he recalled as he watched it. "I tried to drown myself because of him. You rescued me, heart and all."

"You don't mean——"

"Yes, you stepped into his shoes, but don't look so shocked. There have been four—no, let me see—five, since,"

she counted. "Remember it's about six years."

"Seven," he corrected. "Don't try to conceal your age."

"What a disagreeable person you are! I don't remember that trait in you. Did you learn it abroad?"

"How do you know where I have been?"

"Don told me. He heard it somewhere. He still kept up his end of the friendship," she said with a touch of reproach. "Oh, why did you quarrel?"

"We didn't," said Thorpe lamely. "I went away, and we—just drifted apart."

"Can't you just drift together again now?" she asked.

"That's a more difficult process."

"Why should it be? Begin by coming up to see us. You see I live with Gladys and Don now, since father died. You didn't know about that, did you?"

"No. It must have been during the war, was it?"

"Yes, I knew you'd have written to Don, if you had known. It would have meant a lot to him to hear from you."

"Oh, hardly."

"I know it would. So you will come, won't you?"

"Why, I'm—I'm not here for long. I must get back to some work in France," prevaricated Thorpe.

"And you don't want to see Don before you go?"

"Well, yes, of course. If I have time. What's his address?" he stammered to put an end to her astonishment.

She gave him her card.

"Come some time around six," she said ingenuously, "so I can see you, too. I work, you know. It annoyed Don at first, but I want to be economically independent. Gladys says nothing, but she showers me with presents. She gave me this hat, by the way, so I have her to thank for the fun of meeting you again."

"It's a pretty hat," ventured Thorpe.

"It's a copy of an expensive one. Gladys had the feather, and I saw it one day in her box and raved over it. I didn't think she was going to give it to me at first."

"Perhaps it was a keepsake. Women don't usually hoard old hats and feathers, do they?" Thorpe asked with intention.

"Hats, oh, dear, no! But feathers are valuable and this is a very good one. She had only worn it one season—feathers have been out for ever so long—and this was quite like new, but she never would have worn it again."

"Why not?"

"Ah, you should see her! She's very fashionable these days. We're in swell society."

"Do you like it?"

"I? No. I got out." She laughed. "I've told you I'm a working girl."

"Does Gladys like it?"

"Does an artist like to paint? It's her métier—what do you call it?—self-expression."

"And Don?"

"It doesn't seem to bore him."

"Are—have they any children?"

"No."

"Are—are they happy?" This time it slipped out.

"Oh, of course," she returned uneasily. "Have I said anything to suggest the contrary?"

"Not definitely."

"You think married people ought to have children to be completely happy, I suppose. Why? If they don't want them?"

"You think children unnecessary encumbrances?" smiled Thorpe.

"Heavens, no. To me they would be the necessary relief from the monotony of being tied all my life to one person. I'd want them in droves. But if every one felt like that the world would soon be overpopulated. I guess I'm shock-

ing you again. Tell me what you have been doing."

He spoke grudgingly of his adventures, but she drew him out by the show of real interest in her eyes. It was as if he were speaking with Don in the old days before the shadow of Gladys stood between them.

It was getting dark and the winds from the river grew more biting as the sun faded and the bus quickened its pace up Riverside Drive. Near One Hundredth Street Olive reluctantly put an end to their interview by ringing the signal for the bus to stop.

"I've gone a good bit past my block," she said to him as the cumbersome vehicle slowed up. "Don't you think you ought to get off with me and see me home?"

Panic overwhelmed him because this looked so feasible. While he was thinking "Why not?" he found himself muttering some lie about having an appointment on Claremont. And he hated himself for the coward he was at the same time that he was determining nothing would shake his prudence. Olive took his negative with an odd look, something between inquisitiveness and disappointment, like a puppy denied an outing.

"But you'll come some time to see Don, won't you? He really needs you. Good-by," she concluded hastily, as the bus stopped with a jerk. They snatched clumsily at each other's hands and the next moment she had scrambled down the exit and was waving to him from the curb.

"She, twenty-four? Seventeen still, or younger," he mused; "and if Don and Gladys are no more altered than that—no. It's not safe."

Thorpe rode to the end of the line, unaware of the cold, fingering the card Olive had given him, at which he had barely glanced. At last, impulsively, he tore it up and scattered the fragments overside.

## CHAPTER IV.

"This is Mr. Thorpe, Mrs. Hamilton. Mrs. Hamilton has been very anxious to meet you," smiled Thorpe's hostess.

He had put off going away and the weeks had slipped by. There had never been a day when he had not thought of the possibility of meeting one of the Hamiltons again. He dreaded the occasion with fearsome joy, and longed for it. He made excuses to himself for remaining in the States. There were old friends who would never forgive him if, in his brief visit, he failed to look them up. It was pleasant to meet friendliness and welcome on every side. And it was pleasant for a while to luxuriate in the new riches which were his, to know no self-denial, or at least, none but the greatest of all.

Once when he had been going to the theater he had caught a glimpse of Don entering another playhouse near by. He had turned away swiftly and instantly to avoid any chance encounter of eyes, but he had contrived to scrutinize the people around Don to see whether he was alone and he realized hope had blazed in him when it died on finding that crowd empty of the one face.

He chided himself in vain for his foolish and dangerous preoccupation and idleness. Assuredly America was no place for him. In Europe in the rush of work, fatigue, new people, and strange adventures, Gladys had stayed in her proper background, the memory of a loss, sweet but not absorbing. Here every waking and nearly every sleeping hour was filled with her personality. There his love affair had been a thing of the past. Here it was too vitally of the present. It was wrong and weak, "deplorably enervating" were the words he used to describe it. Yet he enjoyed it as one enjoys an injuriously hot bath, getting pleasure from the very lassitude he felt it was his duty to combat.

He had two scores to his credit. One was the destruction of the card Olive had given him. Then, a few days later, a letter had come to him with Don's name and business address engraved on the envelope. He had resolutely burned this unopened without stopping to think of the foolish mock heroics of the gesture.

He had one score against him. About a week after a letter had come from Gladys. He had the excuse of not having recognized her handwriting, for he had never seen it. But there was no good reason why he should have kept it by him constantly to dream and gloat over, though he did not answer it. It was simple and noncommittal enough. Gladys had learned through Olive of his presence in New York and begged him to call.

Don and I will be happy to see you and talk over old times. Do phone us and let us arrange to have dinner together. Olive quite raved over how you look and all the interesting things you have been doing all these years we have not seen each other.

She signed herself "sincerely, Gladys" with "Perry Hamilton" in brackets further down the page as though to identify the Gladys for him. Was this a bit of coquetry? And was there something really wistful in that phrase, "all these years we have not seen each other?" Somehow, Don seemed to be excluded from that phrase.

He was acting like a callow boy who has received a formal note from an adored and unattainable actress. He dreaded to think how he might behave if he were to meet her unexpectedly face to face.

And here she was.

His first sensation was one of disappointment, that of the man nerved for a hurricane who encounters an April shower, or prepared and anticipating a great feast and being handed afternoon tea.

Yes, it was Gladys. He told his heart



that and waited anxiously for it to leap and cavort. But his intellect interfered, looking her over callously from head to foot. It beheld a beautiful, worldly woman sitting back in a low chair in a graceful attitude with her legs crossed and enough of her silk ankles showing beneath the unconcealing draperies of her handsome evening gown to give her just the fashionable appearance of impersonal immodesty. She had a great feather fan, over which she peered quizzically as over a fence. Her hair was dressed close to her well-shaped skull and she wore long earrings. She was, without any doubt, twenty-seven years old, beautiful in her maturity, but no longer the timid, idealistic, lovely girl he had watched go out of his life seven years ago by way of the tea-room door.

Yet her big eyes were soft and dove-like. He revived the reprehensible hope that after all she was the same.

"Don is here, too," she said, smiling up at him.

"I'm glad," he said with constraint.

"Then you know each other?" asked the hostess, surprised.

"I doubt it," said Gladys. "But we did once, years ago."

"Then I'll leave you to renew the past," and she moved away to do her duty by her other guests. Gladys continued to gaze inscrutably over her fan.

"Shall we obey her?" she asked cryptically.

"Can we?" he demanded involuntarily.

He was stunned by the fact that her enhanced beauty, the finished seduction in her eyes and voice, had no power over him. It was with dismay he seemed to be listening to his heart running down, like a clock in need of repairs. He wanted to thrill and feel guilty in her presence, but all he could do was look bewildered and think of himself.

"Losing your heartache," he was

summing up mentally, "is almost as bad as losing your love."

"At least," she began, breaking the pause, "there is some chance for us in the fact that you have not reminded me it is seven years."

"Olive called me down for that," he grinned uneasily. "Besides, now you've said it yourself."

"Then you think there is no chance?" She fanned herself gently; her eyes were drooping languidly. "Why don't you come to see us?"

"I shall now."

"Ah!" Her brows contracted a little as under a spasm of pain. "I am not what you expected?"

"You are what I hoped," he returned gallantly.

She gave him a swift, gleaming glance.

"As bad as that?" She smiled mysteriously, wickedly, and he was horrified at his own interpretation of that look.

"What do you mean?" he demanded bluntly.

"Are you asking that as the result of too much or too little imagination?" she inquired archly. There was no mistaking her intention to flirt boldly. He had been confusing the past Gladys with the present and this had dulled his wits.

"Whichever you prefer," he now rebutted quickly and earned a hearty but musical laugh from her.

"What a satisfactory Sydney you are!" she exclaimed, stroking him caressingly with the edge of her fan.

"I pray I may always be that to you!" he exclaimed. "Tell me, is Don here?"

"That is an unsatisfactory question."

"Then he isn't?"

"On the contrary, he is. But why remind me of it?"

He was not disturbed by this. He knew it was still considered witty in superficial conversation to pretend to find

one's husband the most impossible man in the world.

"Has Don altered?" he asked.

"How should I know?" she shrugged.

"I'd like to see him."

"What morbid curiosity! Why?"

"To find out if he is the same."

"How can any one be the same after seven years? That has given us all time for a thorough transmigration of souls. You, for example, are engaged."

"I? Whoever told you that?" he asked, astonished.

"Then you are not? Married, perhaps?"

"You know I am not."

"Why not?"

"You know that, too."

"Ah, Syd, you are unbelievably charming!"

She rested her fingers for an instant on his hand and gave him a look that made him feel as if he had told her a lie.

Then suddenly the emotional reaction he had been looking for all evening swept over him, but it was so different from what he had expected that he realized now it was because he had been anticipating the wrong thing that he had failed to recognize it before. He, too, had altered and matured. The hot love of his youth had passed, and those puerile and freakish manifestations of its continuation which had lately possessed him were not founded on fact. They were merely the fantastic offspring of imagination and conceited desire. He saw now he had not been adoring Gladys, but his own faithfulness to her. No wonder the rites of this ludicrous worship were ridiculous!

So wide awake was he now, so completely cured, that he felt he could laugh at, yet not be ashamed of, the object he had been.

And Gladys was Gladys, very polished and a little hardened by the grinding of time, but the same dear soul with the same power to awaken love

in him, only this love was different—older, sweeter. He slipped his hand affectionately over hers, and she hid this action with her fan, then drew away as a young man joined the group. After she had introduced them, Thorpe turned to leave.

"I want to find Don," he said in explanation.

"Oh, he's somewhere," she dismissed the idea vaguely. "You'll easily recognize him. He looks very like himself."

"Yes, I know. I spotted him one evening at the distance of half a block," smiled Thorpe.

"And you did not speak to us?"

"You were not with him. And he was gone before I could reach him. He was going into the Blackwood Theater."

"Ah, really!" She raised her brows. "You've seen Vera Ivanov's new play, Mr. Grierson?"

Thus, palpably dismissed, Thorpe moved away. He was at a loss to account for Gladys' sudden coldness. Was she offended that he had not spoken to Don? Surely she must have understood why.

Don's face grew radiant with welcome as he came up.

"Well, well! At last. Good old Syd. I thought I'd never see you. Ollie swore she had met you, but we began to fear she had picked up a stranger. What do you think of a chum who won't look a fellow up when he comes home after being away seven years?"

Those about them smilingly agreed it was very bad form, and Thorpe admitted it contritely.

"I even wrote to the poor simp. Didn't you get my letter? I sent it in care of Carter. He's your lawyer, isn't he? He told me he was. You know he's a good friend of mine. Funny we never ran across each other at his office. Funny we never ran across each other anywhere else, for that matter."

"We did," said Thorpe, determined

to confess all and apologize freely, "but you were too busy in the pursuit of art to notice me."

"Me? Art? Never!"

"The theater. I saw you one night going into the Blackwood, but there was a crowd and you seemed in a hurry."

Thorpe was aware a silence had fallen over the group surrounding them, a silence which was followed by that sudden and aimless small talk which follows a faux pas, as their fellow guests took elaborate care to prove they had not been listening intently. Don's face was flushed.

"Have you seen Gladys?" he asked irrelevantly. "She's here, somewhere. I'll find her for you." And he slipped away. Before Thorpe could make up his mind to ask any one for an explanation, dinner was announced, and the hostess began to corral her guests and start them in pairs for the dining room.

At the table Thorpe was seated some distance away from both Gladys and Don. Occasionally he caught a glance from the former, who was on the opposite side of the long table. Evidently he had not actually offended her and he was relieved at that. Nor, as it subsequently proved, had he made bad friends with Don, either, for after dinner Don sought him out and wanted to hear all about his experiences which Olive had mentioned.

"Why isn't Olive here?" asked Thorpe, suddenly missing her.

"She stayed out in society two years and got disgusted. You know Ollie. Regular idealist. Remember how she went into charity in her young days? Well, it's civic reform now. Suffrage, then war work, and now Heaven knows what. Doctor of politics we call her. But tell me about things."

Don listened eagerly to all Thorpe had to tell. He asked questions that made Thorpe continue when he would have stopped. He went back, beyond

the war, to tell of his life in South America and, to his own surprise, spoke fully and freely of the dead comrade who had succeeded to Don's own place in his heart.

Then he noticed that although Don gave him all sympathy, he had no confidences to offer in return. His outspoken, bluff references to his life never went deeper, to his motives. He did not mention Gladys, and he dropped no hint which would clear up the mystery of the inadvertence of Thorpe's reference to the Blackwood Theater. Other guests joined them and left them and much remained unsaid between them. Finally Thorpe strolled off to try to get a chance to chat again with Gladys.

He felt singularly happy and clear regarding Gladys. He liked this new, unromantic relationship of honest family friend. It made him conscious of growth, of superiority to that feverishly silly boy he had been only the night before.

"Well," said Gladys as he came up, "you look happy."

"I am," he answered. "Haven't I met you and Don again?"

"And the sight of us makes you happy?"

"Of course." He ignored a sardonic note in her voice.

"Then why did you wait so long for that happiness?"

"I am asking myself that. I wonder if most of the obstacles to happiness in life are not shadows and phantoms we ourselves set up in our own light, to worship and fear."

"Yes," she answered in a low voice. "Fetishes of our ancestors we have not outgrown. But that is no new discovery to you."

"You think my experiences should have taught me? Sometimes we are willfully slaves to the fallacy that ignorance is bliss."

"Then you will come to see me soon?"

"Whenever you say."

"Tea, then, next Thursday." He would rather it had been dinner so that he might see Don and Olive as well, but he assented readily. "You have my address?" she asked.

"I have the letter you sent me," he replied, and thought with pleasure how easy it was for him to acknowledge this since the letter had become merely a sane little reference note in his estimation.

Don, too, made a date with him for golf at his country club the following Sunday, and Thorpe went home feeling the nightmare of seven years' duration had been dispelled. His joy in his spiritual convalescence was not far from fatuous.

#### CHAPTER V.

It was April, the mild, promising April of a lengthy spring. Since his friendship with the Hamiltons had been established so firmly, Thorpe saw no reason now why he should go away, and so he indulged himself in a little motor car with which to explore and enjoy the regions around New York. In this he rode up Riverside Drive on the Thursday designated for his tea with Gladys. As he drove along through the pleasant, chill sunshine, he smiled back upon the Thorpe he had been, the man who had not got over taking his youth seriously.

"This is our compensation for living less keenly, I suppose," he mused. "I had always believed it would be sad. But it isn't, when you're over thirty. Perhaps it's a biological necessity that youth must be so interested in love that it cannot conceive of happiness without it.

"Personally," he concluded, deeply and contentedly inhaling a cigarette, "I am glad to be relieved of the obsession. Good-by, Love! Welcome, Life!"

He had intended to ask Gladys to

come out and share the spring with him in his new car, but when he entered her drawing-room he saw she was not alone. On a big sofa lolled a slim youth of twenty or so, his spine luxuriating in the cushions, his knees pointing upward at an acute angle in which there was something colossally impudent. Behind the thin veil of the smoke of his cigarette, Thorpe saw the delicate lines of his handsome, narrow face, his peering eyes, and supercilious mouth, and the satiny sheen of his well-brushed hair.

"This is Mr. Thorpe, Sheldon," introduced Gladys, apparently finding nothing amiss in the young man's lazy discourtesy. "Syd, you behold for the first time an incorrigible drone, Mr. Sheldon Carrol."

"Come, come now, admit I am only a drone by daylight. I make hay while the moon shines," murmured Carrol. "How do, Mr. Thorpe? I ought to hate you."

"Go ahead, do!" said Thorpe more heartily than he meant to, for his whole body seemed to tingle with antipathy against this boy.

"No need of dreading burned-out fires, my child," deprecated Gladys gayly. "You see," she explained, "Sheldon suspects you of having been an old flame of mine."

"That's not the point at all," denied Carrol rudely. "They're all alike, aren't they, Mr. Thorpe? These women! They think only of one thing. I am considering economics. I shall love you like a brother, old man, if you can prove to me that you don't require a stick in your tea."

If Thorpe had been a teetotaler this would have been the occasion of his first fall from grace, so large and fantastic had his hatred of this disagreeable young man become. He was amazed and disgusted to see Gladys laugh at this feeble attempt at wit

"I see," said Thorpe contemptuously. "Our little friend is quite a rounder."

It was a palpable hit. In fact, it was a double play, for Thorpe saw Carrol's angry flush reflected upon Gladys' slightly frowning brow.

"I suppose I do look young to you," retorted Carrol, and his comeback seemed to please Gladys intensely, for she turned triumphantly to Thorpe, saying:

"Well, Syd, what's the answer to that?"

"The answer is: how old is he? I've seen boys of eighteen that did not look as young to me as he does."

The youth slouched to his feet; then, seeing the expectant lift to Thorpe's head, giggled tauntingly.

"Going home, Sheldon?" asked Gladys playfully.

"Not by a long shot. I've taken too great a liking to your guest. He's too fascinating for any unprotected female to be left alone with."

Nor did he go until Thorpe, as much annoyed with Gladys for putting up with him as he was with the young man for his inanities, was ready to leave himself rather than try to outstay him. When the boy did finally take his departure, Gladys went with him to the door and remained in the hall with him some time, bidding him good-by. Thorpe frowned through the window at the wasted afternoon and wondered if this could really be Gladys who was whispering and giggling with that impossible young coxcomb in the hall.

"What good is he?" he demanded impatiently when she finally came back.

"Sheldon? Oh, he's harmless and a little spoiled, that's all. His mother is Mrs. Seton Carrol, you know."

"No, I don't know. What has she done?"

"Biggest woman in New York society to-day."

"Gladys! Is that why you put up with that beastly little cad?"

"Not a bad match for Olive."

"Do you mean to say he's Olive's taste?"

"Who knows? Olive is so odd, though." She shrugged impatiently. "She hasn't really seen him enough to judge. I think I'd have a good chance of making that match if only the silly boy wouldn't——" she broke off and sat tracing patterns on the chair arm with her finger tip, a self-conscious smile on her red lips, her eyebrows raised whimsically.

"Wouldn't what?" asked Thorpe bluntly.

"Wouldn't fall in love with the wrong person."

"Meaning yourself?"

"Oh, Syd, we aren't crude enough to say such things!" She looked up at him protestingly, shaking her head. "Are you jealous?"

"That's Don's business."

"Don! He's my husband. What rights has he over me?"

"That sounds like something that cheap little pest would say."

"Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings. And he's not cheap. He's the most extravagant little pest in his set." She laughed.

He looked at her uncomfortably, wondering how long she intended to sustain this detestable pose.

"Don't look so solemn," she begged.

"What's the matter?"

"I am looking for the old Gladys I used to know."

"Naughty! You mustn't do that!" she rebuked lightly; then, seemingly impressed by his expression of astonishment, she went over to his chair and slipped her arm around his neck. "Dear old Syd," she murmured, her cheek against his hair, "do you really, after all these years, want to find that old, foolish, young, ridiculous, tragic Gladys you used to know?"

"She was a very lovely person," he said, stroking her hand.

She twisted his chin around so that he could look straight at her while she stared back, her face close to his.

"Are you still in love with me or not?" she asked curiously.

"In a different way, dear, a much nicer way."

"You know very well there's only one way of being in love. Do you want to kiss me?" Her face came a bit nearer.

"Yes, awfully. But that doesn't prove much, does it, dear?"

She jerked away from him, pouting.

"You're horrid," she said provocatively.

"Do you want a kiss?" He rose and followed her.

"I don't usually have to ask for one."

"You get them without?" He did not much doubt it as she stood there so pretty and tempting over the glow of the lamp.

"Is there any harm in that?" she demanded and made only a pretense of eluding him when he grasped her in his arms.

He kissed her once and then released her gently, feeling farther than ever away from her. A week ago the very thought of kissing Gladys would have set his brain reeling with terrible delight, and now, with the pressure of her lips scarcely removed from his, he felt merely as if he had been playing with a rather daring flirt.

"There," she said, all smiles, her hands on his shoulders. "Did you find the old Gladys? And wasn't I good to let her come back?"

It seemed impossible that she, too, did not realize the futility of that kiss. He stared at her, puzzled, feeling as if he were hearing a friend talk out of character, under the influence of drink or delirium.

"You're very good, little Gladys." He kissed her again, on the cheek, and led her back to her chair, wondering

what to say next. His greatest desire, dutifully suppressed, was to get away to think things over alone. This was so far from the friendship he had dreamed of. Was he to lose that, too?

"Syd," said Gladys, clinging to his hand as he sat on the arm of her chair, "I believe that now you are the one to be fooled."

"In what way?"

"In considering Don's feelings. There's no need any more. He hasn't got any."

"How do you know?"

"Let me amend it. He has none for me. Do men's feelings always wear out with age? Have men any real feelings at all? Has any one any, except me?" Her voice dropped into lovely notes of musical self-pity which it was torture to listen to.

"Feelings? Naturally," returned Thorpe roughly. "You would not accuse me of lack of them had you seen the inside lining of my brain when you were carrying on with that little Carrol rotter!"

"Then you were jealous!" she cried joyfully.

"You know perfectly well it wasn't that." Thorpe rose impatiently and moved away from her.

"Why won't men admit it when they're jealous?" she asked petulantly. "Women would like them so much more if they were franker."

He stood staring at her from some distance away, his hands clasped behind him. She sat huddled quietly in the corner of the big chair, her hair a little tossed, and the subdued light of the lamp seeming to concentrate on her full, drooping little mouth as she regarded him with shadowy eyes from under bent brows. He was intensely annoyed with himself at having to curb an almost painful desire to crush her in his arms. It wasn't Gladys he wanted, not the old Gladys, who must exist somewhere at least in the memory



of that soft, pretty little thing over there. It was just that sweet, limp, seductive woman with the reproachful eyes which made him feel like a fool for resisting her. It was odd that it should be love, the remembrance of the passionate love of his youth, that should be restraining him now.

"You learned a good deal abroad, didn't you?" came Gladys' purring voice quizzically.

"About what?"

"The power of indifference."

"It—it isn't indifference, dear. It's—it's— Do you remember what you once said about our becoming friends and looking squarely and honestly into the eyes of the world?"

"Did I say that? How little I must have read to be capable of anything so unoriginal! Oh, Syd, for goodness' sake, don't begin to reminisce or you will be accused of growing old!"

"I am and enjoy the process."

"Of growing old! Spare me the grisly jest. Oh, but I can see why you don't mind it. Why you even like it," she added with narrowed eyelids, looking him over.

"Can you really, Gladys?" he asked without much hope.

"It's obvious, Syd. Doesn't your mirror tell you and the eyes of the debutantes? What do you suppose made poor little 'Sheldy' so hostile? In the course of a few years he may rival you. But Heaven is not so kind to women. We don't improve with age."

He was saved from the necessary compliment by the sound of a cheerful, wholesome voice in the doorway and the entrance of Olive, radiant and alert.

"I'm glad I caught you, Syd. Sydney Thorpe, oh, don't I call you Syd?"

"Surely," answered Thorpe, noticing a pucker forming itself between Gladys' carefully shaped eyebrows.

"What are first names for?"

"Thanks. Gladys told me you were coming, so I left the office early. I

wanted to see you and hear more of your adventures. Isn't he the world's best *Othello*, though, Glad?"

"Don't be a child, Olive. And ring for more tea."

"For me. No, thanks." Olive looked subdued.

"I like children," said Thorpe charitably, coming to Olive's rescue.

"You didn't when Sheldon Carrol was here," retorted Gladys.

"He's not a child, he's a lemon," muttered Olive, busying herself removing her hat.

"Probably my dislike for him was based on the fact that his presence prevented my showing off to you by taking you for a drive in my new little car," Thorpe turned the conversation deftly.

"Car?" asked Olive with keen interest. "Was that your runabout I saw down at the door?"

"Now you've started Olive," said Gladys wearily. "She'll run on forever. She's motor-car mad. She even understands the anatomy of the beastly things. Personally, Syd, I'm just as glad Sheldon was here, for I can't see much fun in riding round unless you are going somewhere. It's such a dusty and boring way of spending time. Do you know the Masons? They live at Scarsdale—the Belville Masons? They're car-mad, too, and every one dodges them, in spite of the fact that they're just reeking with money and not a bad family either. I think they think it's like the hunting class in England. It is, with a difference. You ought to hear Mrs. Hornaday talk about them. You know her, Syd. She was at the dinner the other night, the large woman in primrose. She has a biting tongue and every one loves her for it. She lends so much spice to a party." And so she vivaciously led the conversation into channels Olive had no inclination to navigate with her, being careful, however, to sprinkle her gos-

sip with names which would keep it wholly intelligible, if not interesting, to Thorpe.

Soon after he felt he had had enough, and in a mood very different from that in which he had come he bade good-by to them and left.

All the way home he was haunted by a vision of a Gladys, distorted by voluble trivialities, eluding all his efforts to reach her, while what seemed like a shadow of her old self sat in silent judgment on them both in a corner of the room. Later he recognized this shadow as a vague recollection of Olive, remote and critical, regarding him with disapproving eyes.

## CHAPTER VI.

So disappointing had been his interview with Gladys that Thorpe was repelled with the thought of keeping his date with Don on Sunday. He was not sure whether he had been unable to reach the real Gladys or whether she had actually degenerated into what she seemed to be, through her life of purposeless frivolity. If this latter were the case, Thorpe had cause to dread the effect of time on Don.

But Sunday was a day of clear, warm sunshine and the call of late April. It was the sort of weather which so exhilarates, with its definite promise of summer, that mortals are filled with optimism on all scores and against all the teachings of experience. Thorpe took his car out early in the morning, adventuring aimlessly among country roads, lunching on bread and cheese, purchased with considerable trouble from a Sabbath-keeping grocer, and ending up near the appointed hour at Don's club, feeling that no matter what the sequel might be the day had not been entirely wasted.

He had been thinking a good deal of Gladys, wondering if a good dose of country life were not all that she

needed to restore her to her former self. He had learned to love her in the country, at the seashore, and sensitive people are likely always to reflect their backgrounds. No wonder she had seemed so different. He wondered how he might approach Don on the subject.

"Hello, Syd," called a woman's voice from the clubhouse veranda, and he jumped, believing his chance to see Gladys in a rural set had come with the act of wishing for it. But it was Olive's piquant face which looked down at him as he parked his car.

"Hello, Olive," he responded gayly, concealing his disappointment. "Is Don here?"

"In the locker room. He told me you were coming and to be on the lookout for you."

"Are you going to play with us?"

"No, Don hates anything but a two-some. I'm here for tennis." She lifted her racket to show him. He saw she was dressed from head to foot in fresh and snowy white, against which the clear darkness of her skin contrasted healthily, and her long gray eyes seemed an unexpected note in the color scheme.

"You look nice and summery," he said approvingly.

"Thanks." Her color deepened and she seemed momentarily tongue-tied.

"Is Gladys here, too?" he asked to make conversation.

"No. She motored out to Long Beach with some swells. I'd have envied her, if they hadn't been swells."

"That's so. You're the car fan. Didn't you come out by machine?" Thorpe had by now ascended to the porch and sat on the rail facing her.

"No. Train and trolley."

"Want to go back in my little bug with me?"

"Oh, wouldn't I love it! But aren't you taking Don?" Her enthusiasm lit her eyes.

"I hadn't thought to ask him. Besides, the three of us could crowd in

there at a pinch, if you didn't mind the looks of it."

"I wouldn't, you bet!"

"You think Don would?"

"I don't know. I guess not."

"If he does he can go the other way. So it's settled, you come home with me, unless you get a more inviting bid."

"Not likely," she laughed carelessly; then, as a young man in tennis flannels came out on the porch, she rose. Introductions without any special significance followed, and she and the youth went down to the courts, while Thorpe set out in search of Don. He found him in heated consultation with several other club members. Don left the group and joined Thorpe instantly.

"See here, this has got to be settled to-night," an elderly, choleric gentleman called after him, with the air of being personally insulted by Don's indifference.

"Well, call a committee meeting for five. Most of us will be here a day like this."

"Five! With the daylight-saving time! You'd not get a man off the links. Six at the earliest and that's too early."

"Six, then. Any time you say. I'll be back at six. Come on, Syd, it's just a squabble over a house problem. Don't ever be fooled by the glamour of committee membership."

There was a slow foursome ahead of Thorpe and Don, going round the course, so they had time between holes to talk and get acquainted again. The loveliness of the day seemed a good omen. Don was inclined to open-heartedness. He spoke of his business and how, after some struggle, he was becoming a successful, recognized lawyer among "the better social set."

"That's Gladys," he said in the tone of making a concession. "She knows the value of good connections. But they're an awful crowd, Syd. I can't stand much of them, I tell you."

"Pretty hard on Gladys, too, I suppose," suggested Thorpe tentatively.

They were seated on a bank of high, sun-heated grass in which dandelions with unusually long stems raised their golden heads. Showering about and above them were the delicately loaded branches of a drooping forsythia, while a few feet away the sticky little pink-and-white Dresden flowers of the spice bush were coming into bloom.

"It's great here," sighed Don, inhaling deeply. "No, Gladys doesn't mind it. It's a sort of habit with her, I guess," he added vaguely.

"She doesn't seem the type to whom that habit would come very easily, at least she didn't."

"Well, it's a good thing for me it did," smiled Don evasively.

Thorpe was silent, feeling Don's right to reticence and, after a moment or two, his friend rose, declaring the course free for the next play. But when they sat down to wait again, he dropped abruptly the discussion of the game in which they had been indulging and startled Thorpe by coming point-blank to the subject of Gladys.

"You asked me if all this social struggle wasn't hard on her," he said, passing his cigarette case. "I said she didn't mind it. Well, the truth is, I don't know. We've been married nearly seven years now and every year we understand each other less. Women are mighty queer, aren't they?"

"I'm not exactly what you'd call an expert," replied Thorpe; "but I've heard what you say is true. Moreover, it seems to me I've heard something of the kind about men, too."

Don looked at him sharply. His irregular, swarthy features were redeemed by his eyes, so like Olive's that it was as though Olive were looking at Thorpe through a grotesque mask.

"Syd, you are the sort women like. Why didn't you ever marry?" he asked.

"Never had much chance. Too busy."

And Peruvian dames were a bit foreign. In Europe there was, so much else to do, equally dangerous and interesting." Thorpe was delighted with the ease with which he was able to make this statement, for now that he was free of the thralldom of Gladys' love he felt he had never really been under it.

"I thought maybe there was some woman you cared for, but couldn't get," said Don slowly, looking away. "One gets romantic notions about people, especially men who act queer. You know you rushed off without saying good-by to me."

"You were a bit cool to me yourself about that time," Thorpe answered in self-defense, but reddened a bit.

"I know. Syd, it was a long time ago. I wonder if it's ever too late to be completely frank."

"About what?"

Don puffed hard on the remains of his cigarette and, thus hidden by a smoke screen, delivered his bomb.

"I saw you kiss Gladys in the garden that night."

Thorpe clasped his hands about his knees and gazed for a moment straight before him, deliberating.

"Yes," he said at last. "I was in love with Gladys."

"And she with you," proceeded Don moodily.

"No. Not really. Or she would not have married you."

"That's not true, Syd. I knew it at the time. Only I thought I could make her forget you. I loved her very much. The trouble was, I couldn't forget you myself. It was a failure from the start. From the moment you left we were both different, bewitched by the memory of you. Oh, I loved her all right. Too much, maybe. There never was a woman before nor since I've felt the same toward."

"Or since?"

"Yes, it's been as bad as that. Sev-

eral since. Glad and I haven't been living together for the past four years. When you reappeared on the scene I began to wonder if things couldn't be disentangled. I'm game."

Thorpe felt as if a pail of icy water had suddenly been upset over his back. He gasped rather ridiculously and realized that he had grown deadly white.

"You're—you're not serious," he managed to articulate at last.

"Deadly serious, Syd. I'm fond of Gladys and I don't believe any situation short of death is incurable. I'm not afraid of divorce. Neither is she. It's done so much and in such a nice respectable way. She's got good grounds. Every one in our set knows that already. It cannot hurt any of us and will mean happiness all around."

Some one in the group which followed called to them that they were holding up the game. As they rose, Don patted Thorpe's shoulder.

"Think it over," he said quietly. And neither spoke much during the playing which followed. Thorpe industriously took Don's advice to the detriment of his score. He came to the conclusion that pretense now could only enlarge the tragedy, but it cost him an effort to face coming out with the truth.

"Don," he said, as they threw themselves down under a budding beech tree near the sixth hole, "I've a humiliating confession to make. I am not in love with your wife."

He had not meant to be flippant, but perhaps it was just as well. With a quick, apologetic return to a lighter mood, Don dismissed the subject instantly.

"Lucky devil," he said gayly. "I'm always in love, and with the wrong woman. Remember how you got me in bad the other night by blabbing out all that about the Blackwood? That's one."

"I'm sorry. I had no idea," stammered Thorpe.

"Oh, you didn't spring anything new on that crowd. Only it's the custom to pretend secrecy."

A new and startling idea occurred to Thorpe.

"Are you seriously in love with some one, Don? If you were free, would you marry her—whoever it is?"

"Dodo? Dorissa Dana? Heavens no! She's not the sort you marry! But she's a winner. You'd fall for her yourself. Want to meet her? Come on. I'll take you to see her to-night."

"Oh, I'd just as soon not."

"Afraid of your deadly and irresistible charm? Don't worry. You won't get her away from me. She's too loyal."

"I promised to drive Olive home."

"Go ahead and meet us later. I've got this confounded committee meeting to attend first, anyhow. Meet us at Branchelli's at eleven. We're known there and can get up a real party."

It sounded anything but alluring to Thorpe. There was something profoundly uninviting in the prospect of beholding Don's entanglement in a cheap affair. But Don showed a tendency to resent further refusal, and he did not wish to imperil his chances of intimacy with his friend now. For the sake of further intercourse, he reluctantly accepted the engagement.

## CHAPTER VII.

At six o'clock, when Don went in to his committee meeting, Thorpe hunted up Olive and found her on the tennis court. He watched her play out her set, admiring her young litheness and grace and the energy of her game.

She won the set and came up to him.

"I saw you watching," she declared. "It made me play better. I need an audience of kindly, but critical friends."

"Critical?" objected Thorpe.

"Why not, if it's kindly, too? Now I'll go in and get ready, unless you've

come to break the news that you can't take me?" She looked actually worried.

"I can take you, all right, unless you keep me waiting too long."

She dashed off without another word, pulling the hairpins out of her long black hair as she went. Before he thought it likely, she was back, her hair neatly arranged under a small, fashionably close-fitting red hat, her figure concealed in a well-cut sport coat of a dull tan color. She peered over his shoulder at the exposed engine of his car, which, as a pastime, he was oiling. Her disapproval bored through him.

"What's wrong?" he demanded.

"You need na swill the caps wi' oil, this isn't the Cunard," she quoted emphatically.

"What do you know about it?"

"I had a flivver one summer and something even worse the summer after. I spent a lot of my time overhauling them and got pretty intimate with engines. I like what Gladys calls the 'anatomy of the beastly things.' Propinquity it was, I suppose. That spark plug is loose," and her small brown hand adjusted it deftly, leaping with dainty fondness among the cylinders with the grace of understanding.

"When my car's sick," said Thorpe admiringly, "I'll send for you to nurse it. When it's idle I'll be honored if you'll exercise it."

"Really? Would you trust me to run it? Hadn't I better give you a sample of my driving?" She looked hungrily at the shifting rods.

"Jump in then, and if you speed the fine comes out of your own pocket," warned Thorpe good-naturedly, and climbed in after her.

In a surprisingly short time she had mastered the characteristics of that special car and, with an earnest, happy face, she had guided it through the maze of other machines, down the club driveway, out to the open road. Thorpe

watched her, congratulating himself that she was so easily entertained. He had half regretted his promise to take her home, wondering how he was to keep up a conversation with her during those two hours it would take for the trip. Now it looked as if there would be no need to talk. He was mistaken, however, for, once she had headed the car homeward on the uneven spring roadway, she began to ask questions.

First it was about the car and other cars he had known, then about roads and their building or reconstructing abroad. He was annoyed by the thought that she was leading the conversation along lines in which he was not only competent to talk, but could not resist telling about. He found himself playing into her hands and enjoying it.

"Hadh't you better concentrate on driving?" he asked at last.

"I can, while you talk. Why? Am I driving badly?" The minx knew she was not.

"No, only I thought my gabbing might make you nervous," he prevaricated.

"Not at all," she answered quickly, but this interruption killed conversation for a while. She revived it with a somewhat astonishing question. "You're very rich, Syd, aren't you?" she asked.

"Very rich? Well, not exactly that. Comparatively is a better word. Still I'm undoubtedly much richer than I need to be. Why?" he inquired, amused.

"I was wondering what you're going to do with your money."

"Ah, now I remember. You were always interested in charity. Name your pet scheme and the sum required."

She shook her head with a tight-lipped smile.

"I've outgrown charities," she said good-humoredly.

"Oh!" he murmured, puzzled. "Then I don't understand."

"I was thinking about you. That you seem to have nothing to do. Are you taking a vacation? Are you just taking counsel with yourself and looking about you for something to do? Or are you going to go on forever loafing and drawing dividends and getting bored?"

"Oh, I say!" he gasped, astounded.

"Cheeky of me, isn't it?"

"It is."

"But you're such a peach when you talk of the times you were busy. You seem happier in remembering them than in living in the idle present. Forgive me, and do you understand?"

"You don't leave much room for false impressions."

"Suppose you should become like one of those fat-headed do-nothings at the club, the sort of man that goes to afternoon teas."

"Like Sheldon Carrol."

"There are limits to my insolence. But even being mentioned in the same breath with him would be tragic for one who has been what you have been."

"You think to make it up to me for despising me now by praising the man I have been?"

"I don't despise you. I don't want to. You're still the man you have been. Aren't you? Only now you have extra power. Can't you use it somehow?"

"Have you any suggestions?" He was tingling with irritation, hurt pride, defiance, and yet was conscious of singular interest in her arraignment.

"There are a million things for an engineer to do right here in New York—let alone an engineer with money."

"Roads?" he asked after an especially jarring bit.

"You took the hint," she smiled. "I did that on purpose. But not only roads, though you have the means to experiment. There's the housing prob-



lem. Can't you use your brains and technical skill to alleviate it?"

"By building model tenements?"

"That seems a bit restricted, doesn't it? But that's the point; it's for you who know something about it to find the remedy. I think we need most of all a disinterested man with the money, the intelligence, and the desire to set things straight. Of course it's a matter for legislation rather than private enterprise."

"And you want me to go up to Albany and bribe assemblymen?"

"Don't laugh. Your brains are to solve the difficulty and your money to give your proposition publicity. Your reputation backs that. I can help you, if you'll let me," she added hesitatingly.

"You?"

"I know some politicians. It's part of my work," she said apologetically. "You see, I'm a secretary in a sort of good-citizen school. Want to come down and look it over yourself? We need your kind."

They had come to a long stretch of vacant road ending in a wooded copse. The late sun slanted in deep gold bands against the newly plowed fields on either hand. Birds, preparing for their night's rest, fluttered, hopped, and chirped on the crumbling stone fences or among the telegraph wires. From the clustered trees, even some distance off, came the ringing of their voices, confused, sweet, and metallic, like the chiming of bells. The rosy sunset bathed Olive's dark face with rich color. She seemed unbelievably real, thought Thorpe quaintly, she and the peaceful and beautiful world which was her background. He tried in vain to see in this clear-headed, unsentimental young woman something of the silly little curate chaser of seven years ago. Nothing remained but the vigor and a certain brusqueness of intellect. She, too, had altered to fit this new world, but whereas the others had merely aged

she had grown. He smilingly took the address of her business firm and heard her dilate on its hopes and accomplishments. He liked her description of the men she worked with, her picturesque analyses, a certain boyish fairness with which she treated them, striving to understand and do justice to the motives of all.

"What a lot of fun you are getting out of it!" he commented at last.

"We all are," she replied. "Didn't you get fun out of your reconstruction work? This is quite a lot like it."

"What will you do when you marry?" he asked casually.

"I shall probably give up active field work till my children are pretty well reared, but I'll try to keep in touch with it to take it up again when they no longer need all my attention. I'll have time to read and think, I expect. I've seen lots of mothers who have."

It was an entirely unlooked-for reply. He had expected her to deny any thought of marriage or to decry the absorption of wifehood and maternity. He naturally leaped to the conclusion that her answer was based on something definite and personal, and for some unknown reason this made him resentful as he mentally reviewed the men she had described to him, trying to guess the chosen one.

"Are you engaged?" he asked.

"No," she answered in a matter-of-fact way, "but, of course, I've figured on the possibility of marriage. I used to think it ought to make no more difference with a woman than with a man, but if you have children and like them well enough to bring them up yourself, of course it must. Still, a woman of forty-five usually has her brood well launched in the world. And then what? I'd get into mischief if I weren't busy with something. One must be useful to be happy; don't you think so?"

They fell silent, but their thoughts

ran along together, and they could not but realize this. Thorpe pictured Gladys, erotic, bored, and discontented. He thought of Don's excuses for her and how legitimate they had sounded. It tempted him to put another question to this self-confident young philosopher.

"Suppose you marry the wrong man?" he suggested.

"Well," she said, with a side glance which added a volume of footnotes to her answer, "I wouldn't make it my life work."

Dusk was closing down about them as they entered the city. Their conversation grew more disconnected and less personal under the influence of the city crowds and noises. She offered to let him drive, but he politely deferred to her, and she brought them up skillfully and without accident before the door of her home.

Only after he had said good night and had started downtown to a lonesome supper at his club before his late appointment with Don, did it occur to Thorpe that he might have taken Olive somewhere to dinner.

"Some other time," he meditated. "She's a nice kid. A bit cocksure, but interesting and nice."

## CHAPTER VIII.

Thorpe pictured Dorissa Dana as the regular movie vampire, dark, sinuous, gorgeously gowned, and a trifle bizarre. He was surprised to find Don sitting at the table at Branchelli's with a slender, girlish companion who had a small, triangular face, wide, kitteny eyes, and a mouth as honest and guileless as Olive's.

"Hello, Mr. Thorpe," she said as he came up. "Don's been telling me a lot about you."

"And he told me a lot about you," lied Thorpe genially, taking her outstretched hand.

"Now cut out kiddin' about it!" exclaimed Dorissa, pleased nevertheless.

"Tell me about your special act, Miss Dana," said Thorpe. "Do you dance, too?"

"Listen at him! Say, Tightwad, ain't you seen my show yet?"

"I'll go to-morrow night."

"You'll lose your pull with me if you don't. It's a good little show, ain't it, Donny? Sure, I dance. What did you think I done, preached?"

"She's some little dancer," put in Don.

"Oh, I got some good notices all right. But I don't want to dance all my life, see? I want to act," confided Dorissa.

"What's the big idea?" asked Thorpe.

"Me future. I can't go round dancing when I'm fifty, can I? But, heavens, you can act till you're a hundred if you're in right with the managers, and they'll let you die of old age right on the stage, doing *Camille* or something in grand clothes. It's a pipe."

"Dodo, at eighteen, looking forward to dying of old age," commented Don.

"Eighteen! Hah! That's my stage age. I been eighteen three years now. Reckon it out." She lit a cigarette calmly. "It's time I was getting a move on me, ain't it the truth? Know any managers, Mr. Thorpe?"

"I'm afraid not."

"He's got lots of money though," grinned Don. "Get him to back a show for you."

"Say, is that true?" A sharp little gleam transformed her ingenuous eyes as she looked swiftly from one to the other. "Has he got kale?"

"The boy Rockefeller," declared Don lightly.

"Honest?" She looked closely at Thorpe. "Could you rake up ten thousand to back a sure winner?"

"Say, Dodo, I didn't introduce my best friend to you for a holdup," ex-

claimed Don as Dorissa's face became more and more serious.

"Well, I'm just telling him something to his advantage, see? I ain't asking anything of him. He can think about it if he wants, can't he? It's a good chance to make money, that's all," she grumbled.

"Oh, Dodo's the great little financier," murmured Don.

"Oh, you can that. I suppose I ain't got no head at all, just feet to dance with. That's all you think about me."

"You have a darn pretty head, Dodo. What do you think, Syd?"

"Yeah, now jolly me!" But her face cleared good-naturedly as she patted the conventional curls over her ears. "Say, it's slow here, can't we go somewheres where there's dancing?"

"I should think you'd get enough of that every night," said Don. "Besides one of us will be left if you go off with the other."

"Couldn't we ring in Madge Mallory? She's the kind you like—all feet and no bean. There's five of us in my act, Mr. Thorpe," she added to Thorpe. "I'm the lead. Madge is one of the others. She's nice enough, even if she is a simp. I know she'd be glad to go with us to-night 'cause her friend's away. He travels. But say," she added as an afterthought, "he's a real friend, so you can't get fresh with her. She's straight. She's going to marry him some day."

"Promise you won't get fresh, Syd?" asked Don solemnly.

"I promise," said Thorpe as they got up. Dorissa gave Don a playful push.

"He's an awful kiddier," she remarked.

Madge Mallory, when they routed her out from her lodging, proved to be the antithesis of Dorissa, a tall, dignified, dark-haired girl with an air of hauteur which she believed to be the mark of the élite. She had an artificial drawl and used a pretentious vocabu-

lary not always with complete success. They soon saw the force of Dorissa's warning, for she brought up the subject of her respectability as soon as they were in the taxi going to the dance hall which Dorissa had chosen as a "good little place."

"I believe in being reefined in word and thought, and I always try to be," she said with humble self-praise. "A lady should always remember she's a lady and not do nothing no lady wouldn't say or do. It isn't your clothes makes you what you are, it's your actions. Don't you think I'm right?"

"You're always right, Madge," encouraged Dorissa. "And it's funny, too, you think up such new ideas! But you didn't need to worry. I warned them there wasn't to be no rough stuff. Didn't I, fellers?"

"You did," said both men readily.

"Mr. Who's-this wanted to learn to dance and I told him you was the best teacher in the world, that's all," went on Dorissa's careless, nasal voice with its vulgar but pleasant inflections. She possessed that underrated charm, good temper, besides a sort of kindly tact. Rather against his will Thorpe admitted to himself that he could sympathize with Don for being fascinated by her.

"Don't you dance at all?" demanded Madge scornfully.

"Nothing new," replied Thorpe.

"Oh!" gasped Madge audibly, and Dorissa laughed outright.

As a fourth in a party which was designed to give Dorissa and Don a chance to pair off, Madge was a failure. She had evidently decided to protect her virtue by repudiating the rich and attractive stranger. She declared he was impossible to dance with, so Dorissa had to take him in hand. Dorissa's merry encouragement and exceptional dancing soon had Thorpe enjoying himself intensely and improving so greatly that after a rueful signal from Don,

who was being bored by Madge's banalities, Thorpe was able to persuade that stately damsel to try him again.

"Do I do better?" he asked as they glided smoothly through the crowds.

"Yes. If a person has a good ear and is light on his feet and knows the steps he can learn quick. But I don't think a man has to be a good dancer only to be a fine man, do you, Mr. Thorpe?"

To agree with her in such passages of so-called conversation was to be accessory to her imbecilities. Thorpe was tempted to deny passionately all her truisms, but he realized this could but sink him into blacker depths of humorless absurdities.

"Don be darned!" he declared mentally. "I'll take Dorissa."

And next dance he did. She had a bit of gossip to disclose, looking up at him in wide-eyed enjoyment of an unusual situation of personal interest to her.

"What do you know about that? I'm going to be at a party with the missus!" she exclaimed, smacking her lips.

"What missus?" asked Thorpe.

"His," she nodded her head in the direction of the table they had occupied with Don. "Donny's. Ain't it a joke?"

"It sounds like one. Is it?"

"No, honest! It's a garden party and me and the rest of us girls is to take our act up there, special. See? And she's one of the guests. Do you know her? Huh?"

"Yes."

"What does she look like?"

"Brunette and rather slight."

"Say, that's a speaking likeness, ain't it? What's her favorite color?"

"How should I know?"

"Ain't that like a man! I mean what color does she wear most? Didn't you never notice?"

"No; ask Don."

"I see myself! She must be a pill, all right, but he's stuck on her."

"How do you know?"

"Oh, I'm wise, believe me. But it ain't going to last much longer."

"Why not?"

"You're full of compliments, ain't you? I'm 'why not'."

The notion that she was actually planning to steal Don away from Gladys came to Thorpe with a considerable shock. He recognized something sinister under the gay fluff which seemed to be her composition, and it was like discovering a revolver hidden away among silks and chiffon.

"You think you can get Don?" he asked incredulously. She half closed her eyes without speaking and looked more like a canny kitten than ever. "You think he'd marry you?"

"Why not? I'd be fixed for life then, wouldn't I? Now you know why I'm crazy to see the first Mrs. Donald Hamilton."

"You have nerve!"

"That ain't nerve; it's just human curiosity. Ah, go on, put me on. What would she be likely to have on?"

"What party is it?" asked Thorpe with sudden recollection.

"It's that big May party up some place on the Hudson. Mrs. Something-or-other Jones or something. She pulls one every year."

"Mrs. Lawson-Abott? I'm going there myself."

"You? Hah! An' you a man! Ain't you got nothing better to do?"

Her scorn was more stinging than Olive's disapproval, but it made him think of Olive. He flushed.

"I'm on my vacation," he explained. "It'll be over soon."

"Well, I didn't think you was a real lounge Lizzie, but it sounded funny. Say, if you're going, you could easy slip me the high sign. See? Stand next to her, or send in word to me what kind of a hat she has on. You can see their hats fine. Aw, come on! It wouldn't be any harm now, would it?"

I'd ask Donny, honest I would, only he won't be there. Oh, I'm just rearing to get my lamps on her."

"What good would it do?"

"Gee, it's only square! Ain't she getting her eyeful of me? She knows all about me all right. But that's like your crowd. You all stand together even on a little thing like this." She looked sulky.

Her childishness amused him and, as a matter of fact, he could see no harm in her appeal. Perhaps the glimpse of Gladys might have the excellent effect of disillusioning her regarding the likelihood of winning Don into marrying her. He agreed to stand next to Mrs. Donny for purposes of identification all through Dorissa's act. He added, laughing, that she should not miss getting a good look at her if he had to drag them together and present them, face to face.

## CHAPTER IX.

Thorpe did not forget his promise to go to Olive's place of business to meet some of the men she had spoken of with the idea of interesting himself in their work. He took pains to go late and take his car so that she might have the fun of driving it, and he determined to ask her out for dinner to make up for his neglect on the night they had come back from the country club together.

He was surprised to find she had not overestimated the work that was being done by her concern. For the first time since he had become a man of wealth and leisure, he began to feel the need of occupation. The sort of thing these men stood for had the fascination of all plans for reform with the added charm of seeming both practical and far reaching.

Olive was greatly pleased at his invitation to dinner and took up the phone to let Gladys know she would not be

home until later. The voice which answered her over the wire seemed to startle and annoy her and, when she had been connected with Gladys, Thorpe, who had been standing at the window trying not to be interested, learned why.

"Was that your tame robin again?" Olive demanded. "I've just called up to tell you I'm going out to dinner with Syd. . . . Syd Thorpe, Sydney Thorpe. Yes. . . . I suppose because he thinks I look hungry. . . . No, only this minute. Isn't Don home? . . . Who? . . . No, Glad, please don't! . . . Don't. . . . You know very well why not. Please. . . . All right then, I'll come home, anyway. . . . Yes. I'll ask him. . . . All right. Good-by."

She put up the transmitter and swung around in her swivel chair with her shoulders hunched and her hands clasped before her.

"Damn!" she exclaimed through her clenched teeth, and Thorpe saw her eyes sparkled moistly.

"Now what?" asked Thorpe.

"It's all off, Syd. I can't go."

"Some other time then."

"Syd, she asked you to dinner up there. Would you come? You see, here's the way it is. When I told her I'd be out she said all right, that Sheldon Carrol was there so she wouldn't be alone."

"And you want me to share with you the pleasure of dining with Sheldon Carrol?"

"To share with me the pleasure of preventing Sheldon Carrol from dining alone with Gladys," corrected Olive fiercely. "Won't—won't you come?" she added, controlling herself with an effort.

His repugnance melted before the appeal in her eyes.

"Come ahead," he shrugged. "But if I go after him with a table knife, do not be surprised and on no account are you to interfere in his behalf."

"Good old Syd," she said chokily. "You are a brick."

In a few minutes they were in his car, and she was threading their way through the crowded traffic of lower Broadway.

"Syd," she began at length, "it may sound funny to you that I have to go home to—to-chaperon Gladys."

"It doesn't sound funny, Olive."

"He's such a detestable little viper! Already there's been talk. I believe he spreads it."

"Why does she stand for it?"

"His mother's prestige, chiefly."

"Does social climbing mean so much to Gladys?"

"Don't look so contemptuous. It's not an easy pastime. And don't judge Glad too hard for taking it up. It's her only outlet. Women who are idle but not lazy must play at some game. It isn't that. It's—it sounds so cheap, Syd. It's hard to admit it even to you. But I dread her enjoying something else, playing with fire. Do you see?"

"I see."

"Or—may I be terribly frank?"

"The franker the better."

"Sometimes I'm afraid she does it to scare or coerce people."

"Don?"

"Some of it is for him. To make him jealous or pay him back for the way he acts. I'd be hopeful if I could believe it was only that. Sometimes I think she cares more for him than she admits. She must have been in love with him in the old days, before you came along." She stopped suddenly, and he saw her profile turn a deep crimson.

"So you know about that, too?" he asked with a quiet smile.

"One day, quite lately, she told me," she stammered. "For a bit I counted on its being a solution for her. Till I saw you that day you came up to tea."

"You realize it is all over?"

"Yes. But she doesn't."

"Oh, really?"

"Don't you see what made her ask Sheldon to stay for dinner?" she demanded desperately. "It was on the chance of me bringing you up."

"I might still not go."

"That's all right. You wouldn't be dining with me."

"She's jealous of you?"

"Of any one. That's why she's fond of making others jealous. I suppose we always chastise others with the weapons we dread most ourselves. She'll try to make you jealous of Sheldon to-night."

"If you think that will encourage the little brute, I'll back out right now."

"Oh, who cares about him!" exclaimed Olive impatiently. "Glad can manage him whenever she wants to. It's she herself, her own recklessness we've got to watch out for. Syd, I believe you have stood between Don and Gladys all their married life."

"Don agrees with you."

"And you know it?"

"Don told me last week. But it doesn't strike me as very plausible or serious," objected Thorpe uncomfortably.

"It is true and very serious."

"What can I do about it?"

"Would you be willing to try to get Don and Glad to combine against you?"

"Anything you think necessary."

"It will be hard. They've drifted so far apart. And lately Don—you must have heard. There is some one else."

"I understood this was only one of several some one elses."

"Don has been rather horrid. But this girl, a sort of super-chorus girl, seems to have more of a hold on him than the others. And the talk about her has bothered Gladys. Suppose Don really has fallen in love with her, ceased to care about Gladys any more. She has managed to complicate things awfully."

A sudden inspiration darted into



Thorpe's head. Ever afterward he connected it with the column at Columbus Circle which they were passing at that moment. Here was a clear way to incur Don's hostility, prove to Gladys his love for her was dead, thus rousing her against him, and eliminate Dorissa Dana from their affairs, all at one blow.

"I have an idea," he said succinctly.

"What is it?"

For a moment he considered telling her, but he decided against it.

"It's ugly," he said; "maybe I won't have to use it, so I'd rather not say. But depend on my trying to straighten things out."

"Can I do anything to help?"

"No, just trust me."

He changed the subject, and they were talking about her work and the chances of his arranging to go in for it, too, when they finally reached the Hamilton apartment.

Going up in the elevator, Thorpe returned to the other subject after a moment's reflection.

"Olive," he said, "part of my scheme is to refuse to stay to dinner to-night. I'm telling you so you won't think I'm reneging."

She nodded blankly, and nothing more was said between them until they were ushered into Gladys' drawing-room.

Thorpe instantly caught sight of Sheldon Carrol, who was sitting with his feet sprawled out before him, looking through the smoke of a cigarette which he did not take the trouble to remove from his mouth.

"Look at the guests arriving!" he exclaimed lazily. "Hello, Thorpe. This is going to be quite a party."

Thorpe nodded to him as he shook hands with Gladys.

"Sheldon was excited when he knew you were coming," Gladys said.

"So was I when I knew he was here," answered Thorpe.

"Not half so excited as I was," murmured Olive.

"It seems to have taken Sheldon to bring you up for dinner," suggested Gladys. "The prospect of a fight, I suppose."

"But I'm not staying for dinner."

"Why not?"

"I have a date."

"For dinner? What happened to it when you were going to take Olive out?"

"It suffered suspended animation."

"Why won't you stay? Tell me the truth," begged Gladys. "Is it because Sheldon is here?"

"Will you send him home if I say yes?"

"I have something to say about that," broke in Sheldon indignantly.

"Don't worry, silly boy. I'm not likely to do anything like that," declared Gladys quickly.

"Then I'll withdraw my proposition and I'll bid you all good-by. Olive, Gladys, Mr. Carrol." He bowed politely to each and turned.

"You are not really going!" protested Gladys.

"Of course. You don't think I'm acting like this just to be coaxed, do you?" asked Thorpe.

"Very well, then. Good-by," said Gladys coldly. But she could not help adding before he got to the door, "I don't quite see how you could have a reserve date in case Olive turned you down, unless"—her eyes brightened cat-tishly—"you asked Olive merely out of compliment, without any idea that she would accept, in fact hoping she wouldn't."

"It's not too late yet, Olive, to get him in wrong by deciding to go with him anyway," suggested Sheldon.

"Hush, Sheldy, or they'll think you make it a practice to go where you are not wanted," interposed Gladys maliciously.

"But how could he go anywhere if

he didn't?" asked Thorpe, the more venomously because he thought Gladys' thrust had hurt Olive.

"Don't judge others by yourself."

Sheldon sacrificed originality to ill temper.

"But Syd seems to have struck one house at least where he is wanted. The hostess is quarreling to keep him here," said Olive casually.

"I, quarreling, and to detain any one against his will? Never!" retorted Gladys.

"Then I may go?" asked Thorpe with elaborate meekness.

"I'm just curious and would like to have you explain things to me," said Gladys. "It strikes me you must think very little of one or the other of the two people you made simultaneous engagements with. Is the other a woman?"

"Yes," answered Thorpe promptly.

"Oh! Do I know her?"

"You've heard of her frequently."

"In our set?"

"No."

"You mean she's——" Gladys bit her lips.

"Oh, I say!" cried Sheldon, sitting up suddenly. "The plot thickens! Now, who's the little rounder?"

Thorpe caught a glimpse of Olive's serious, watchful eyes.

"Would you like to know the lady's name?" asked Thorpe of Gladys obligingly.

"You're impossible," gasped Gladys. "I certainly don't think Olive can feel flattered."

"Olive? What has it to do with her?"

"You are going from her to—to this other—date."

"No," corrected Thorpe mildly. "I'm going from here."

"Then go quickly," said Gladys, exasperated.

"Yes. Again good-by. Remember me to Don. Oh, and by the way, give

him a message for me." He held her gaze a moment, wondering how far he might go. Her eyes faltered.

"A message?" she asked.

"Yes. Tell him—from me—that he's a good picker."

Satisfied that this grossly rude innuendo could not possibly be without its effect, he bowed himself out of the room.

## CHAPTER X.

During his dinner at the club, Thorpe thought over and modified his plan. After putting his car away he went to the Blackwood Theater. He had seen Dorissa's play two nights before and had visited her backstage after it, largely to prove to her that he was really there.

To-night he went directly to the stage door and sent up his card. Word came back that she would see him in a minute and he was to be sure to wait until she did. He stood amid the neatly packed scenery and properties of the later acts of the play. The first scene was set, though the play had not begun and only a few cold lights in a working border lit its garishness.

At last Dorissa—or a caricature of Dorissa—picked her way toward him past flats and wires, rich cushions, already stained and dusty with handling, and flimsy trellises, laced with crumpled artificial vines. As she came close to him it interested him to see that her flesh-color costume, so delicate and evanescent from the front of the house, was really a substantially stitched, decent though fragmentary affair, somewhat droopy and a little soiled. The make-up with which she fought the glare of the spotlight was fantastic in the extreme, plasters of grease, it seemed, in all the colors of the rainbow. Even the lovely whiteness of her arms and neck at this range showed itself to be streaky whitewash carelessly applied. He experienced for a moment

the sentimental pang of the inexperienced at this barbarous defacement of the human body, wondering how far it might poison the spirit behind it, not realizing it was as foreign to the girl's soul as the smudges of paint on a palette are to the soul of an artist.

"Hello, Thorpy," she said gayly. "I'd of asked you up to the dressing room, but Madge is there and a couple others. Madge let out a yelp and threw a fit at the idea. Ain't it awful to be refined?"

It was a surprise to hear her voice unaltered.

"Dorissa, I wonder if you know what a weird-looking sight you are?" he exclaimed with a chuckle.

"Say, what's the matter with me; ain't I all there?" She clutched at various, presumably insecure portions of her costume. "Don't tell me I ain't hooked up!"

"Oh, no. What there is of your costume seems to be working overtime. It's your face I mean," explained Thorpe.

"Ain't you seen me in my war paint before? No, I guess last time I must of been cleaned up. Well, you want to take a good look because that's one swell make-up, let me tell you. See that purple below the eyes and green above? That gives depth. I got it from a girl at the Follies. She was thirty if she was a day, and on the stage she looked about thirteen. I don't need it so much now, of course, but it's good to be hep to it, for when I *will* need it."

"Still expecting to grow old overnight!"

"That does happen, let me tell you! Madge knew a girl whose hair got all gray from worry in one day. Heavens, I'd die! Say, did you come here just to tell me how funny I looked or what?" she added, suddenly business-like.

"I wanted to ask you to go to supper with me after the play."

"I got a date with Donny."

"Maybe you'd let me come along, if you knew what I wanted. Maybe you'd even throw Donny's date to the discard," insinuated Thorpe.

She looked at him sharply out of that expressionless daub of vivid paint which masked her face. Her eyes grew round.

"You—you ain't, by any chance, thinking of casting yourself as angel to little Dodo?" she asked incredulously.

"If I said 'yes', would you break your date with Don and come with me?"

She stared at him searchingly, and he wondered what she was thinking about.

"Is this straight?" she demanded at last.

"If you mean, do I mean it; yes, it is."

"Then I'm with you," she said heartily.

Her hearty readiness was something of a blow to Thorpe. He remembered rather cynically Don's boast of her loyalty. She may have seen something of this thought in the slight contraction of his eyelids.

"Donny won't die of it," she declared soothingly. "And I got to think of myself, don't I?"

"I was counting on that."

"All right, but don't hurt yourself counting too hard on anything, see? Now we can't meet here. He'll come here, so I'll have to beat it early and tell the girls to say I had a headache. No, that won't do. He'd be up after me to the apartment. Oh, I'll frame up something all right. We'll go somewhere quiet where he won't think of looking for us, huh?"

He suggested an old-fashioned hotel on lower Fifth Avenue, and she agreed, so they shook hands on it and he left

her feeling like a black traitor to the friend he was endeavoring to help.

She met him about the time they had arranged and, as she came in, he noticed her resemblance to an impudent sparrow in her cheap and exaggeratedly stylish street clothes, from her tiny brown hat, cocked too far over one eye, to the high-heeled brown satin slippers which it took much of her skill as a dancer to manipulate gracefully.

"All fine," she informed him, showing her big teeth in an excited grin. "Do you know what I thought of? I says to say that Madge had gone home sick, see? And me with her. He knows he ain't got a chance to get his nose inside Madge's place, so he wouldn't go there. It pays to have a few respectable friends, don't it?"

"You're a cold, calculating little vampire," laughed Thorpe as a head waiter led them to a secluded table. "You have no sentimental notions about friendship, have you?"

"Believe me, I got no sentimental notions about nothing," said Dorissa emphatically. "And," she added with a sharp look as they seated themselves, "you got nothing on me. What do you want to take me away from Don for?"

"I've got a crush on you myself."

"To the tune of twenty thousand cash? Like hell you have!"

"Twenty thousand!" Thorpe was taken aback. "I thought you said ten."

"Aw, you could do it for that, I suppose, but you want to do it right, don't you? And I'll need decent clothes and all. Say, you'll get it back and more with it, if we pick the right play! You can count on me to do my best because it's to my intrust, see? I may never get the chance again."

"Good little old rational kid," he said, patting her hand where it lay on the table, still gritty with the sketchily removed chalk make-up, and sparkling with two handsome diamond rings.

"Where do you get that 'old' stuff?" she demanded peevishly as a waiter came up for their order. "I'm eighteen, not a day older and that's the truth!"

When the waiter had gone she sat looking at Thorpe in silence, with an expression that showed so clearly she had something to say that he waited for her to begin.

"Well," he said lightly and with some curiosity at last, "get it off your chest before we begin to talk business. What's the trouble, Dodo?" He purposely used Don's pet name for her, but she did not flinch.

"You think I'm pretty rotten, huh?" she asked in a low voice.

"What an idea! Why should I?"

"Because—because of what I done to Don and all. Maybe I am. I don't know what decent is. If it's what my mother told me it was, I ain't got no use for it, see? She's in potter's field now. Do you know how old she was when they put her there? Twenty-eight. Real twenty-eight. Only—only a little older than me now. Do you know why? 'Cause a man was decent and married her, and she had to be decent and stick to him, though he was a rotten drunk. She let him hit her any time he felt like it and me, too. Oh, he was decent all right! He didn't kill her in one biff. He took about four years at it. My father never was married to her, see? And this feller comes along with a regular wedding ring and didn't ask no questions about how I got into the family, see? I was ten when she croaked. Believe me, I ain't going to die poor!"

"I understand," said Thorpe.

"No, and I ain't going to die till I have to. It's awful to think about, ain't it?" The pupils of her frightened blue eyes were dilated at the thought. "I take good care of myself, you bet. And I don't mind telling you"—fear gave way to an expression of cunning as one eyelid quivered half closed—"I got

money put by already, and these things"—she indicated her rings—"is always ready cash. In case I do get sick I can get the best doctors in the world, see? And if I live to be old, too old to work any more, I'll have a nice, soft, big bank account to rest me weary bones on. Am I right, huh?"

"You are very prudent," agreed Thorpe.

"Huh? Ain't I? None of this short and merry spiel for me, you betcha. Oh, I've heard girls pull that stuff and when it looked like the Lord was going to call their bluff, did they holler? I'll say they did! I guess I ain't no more scared to die than the next one, if it comes to that. Say, did you ever see a stiff?"

"Yes," answered Thorpe, who had likewise seen too much death panic to treat her mood with levity. "But let's talk of something more cheerful and sensible. Tell me about the play you had in mind," Thorpe interrupted, and was pleased to see her mood of panicky horror dissolve instantly like a spot of alcohol in the sun.

"Oh, gee! I got *just* the play! Some one I know wrote it, but ain't got the pull to have it put on. There's a part in it I could eat up. They'd be naming hats after me if I ever played it."

"Comedy?"

"Not a chance! Emotional stuff. She's the governor's wife, see? And him and her don't hit it off good, see? She was engaged to another feller before she married him, but he was rich or something and her family sicked her on. She still loves him and he loves her, this other bird, or she kinder thinks she loves him, though really she's in love with her husband, see? Only he thinks she's in love with him. Well, then there's talk. How is it, it is? Oh, it's about him. He's running for office again, see?"

She plowed into the story bravely, but without aptitude. Thorpe soon lost

the thread of it and after a few interpolated questions gave up hope of following her. He sat studying her instead, wondering if it were possible that she did not realize the incongruity of her rendering of the part she coveted.

"And he tells her to get the hell out of here, and she draws herself up proud and says"—tremulo—"You're a mean mutt, and I took you for a man." Or something like that."

It trailed on interminably, interspersed with her admiring ejaculations or such comments and asides as "I could do that swell!" All at once he saw her for what she was, foolish as a child, shrewd as a pitifully disillusioned old woman, with no morality except honesty and kindness, and these subject to modifications; a slave of all the black fears flesh is heir to, armed against them only with the doubtful defenses of ignorance and conceit. In the course of the evening it came to him that he could not treat her as she expected to be treated. Not merely, as he first believed, because a more unusual and honorable relationship between them would lessen his unquenchable feeling of treachery toward Don. But there was something about her, perhaps her stark helplessness, that awakened in him protective affection. He could not take advantage of her in any way. After all, was he not using her already as a pawn in a game he was playing for Gladys' happiness, and did not that put him under obligation enough?

He took her home, wondering how she would receive his decision. She let him into her apartment, and they stood for a moment in her untidy little parlor under the piercing glare of the electric globes in the badly shaded chandelier.

"What's the matter?" she demanded, looking him over uneasily. "You're awful quiet. You ain't changed your mind or anything, did you?"

He took her hand kindly, smiling.

"I'm going to give you a shock, Dodo," he said.

"You—you ain't going to welch?" She grew deadly pale and there was a shrill, ugly undertone in her voice. She had sensed that her synopsis of the play had not made the hit with him which she believed it to be.

"Don't worry, I'll stake you to a play all right," reassured Thorpe. "But I'm going to tell you some plain truths you'll balk at. I'm going to speak to you like a brother."

"What do you mean—brother?" she demanded suspiciously.

"Just that. I want you to make a success, lots of money, and fame and the chance to play good parts with big managers. To that end you must trust me implicitly and obey me even when you disagree with me. That will be all I shall ask of you. Every bit."

She looked at him with dropping jaw.

"My Lord! You're trying to reform me! Just like a feller in a novel or the movies!" she gasped.

"Nothing of the sort!" disclaimed Thorpe, blushing. "Your conduct is your own affair, except in regard to one person, Don. As for me, I don't happen to care for you that way, that's all, and I find I like you better than I expected. Oh, don't try to understand," he added as her face grew blanker every moment. "Just listen to some wholesome brotherly advice I'm going to give you. You are about as fit to play the part of a lady of culture as a trained elephant. Less, really, for elephants can't talk. Now, if you want rôles like the governor's wife—and Heaven knows why you should!—you've got to study and work for them. I'll get you the teachers and you've got to do the rest."

"You mean to say you think I'm no lady?"

"If you get huffy, I quit. I know

you're no lady, but, what's more important, you could never be suspected of being one while you use the language you indulge in and the voice and the gestures—yes, and the clothes."

"What's the matter with my clothes? Huh?"

"It'll take a longer time if you persist in not seeing. Dodo, face facts. I've got to, if I'm to put up twenty thousand dollars on you. You couldn't play the character you described in a year, two years, maybe longer. Depending on yourself."

"Say," broke in Dorissa with harsh skepticism, "this looks to me like a stall."

"If we can find a part you can play now, you shall begin rehearsals to-morrow. But with your voice, accent, and get-up it will have to be a character part. Are you game?"

"Who me? Me do character at my age! *Me!*" She was on the verge of noisy tears. "It is a stall! Oh, you dirty quitter!"

He put his arms about her, and she burst into stormy sobs on his chest. He smiled to himself at his own predicament, over her bleached and tousled hair, and wondered how to go on. When she was quieter he placed her in a chair and sat on the edge of the table beside her, determined to talk a language she would understand.

"Dodo, remember when you asked me to point out Mrs. Donny and I agreed? Do you know why I was so ready to do it?"

"Huh?" She tried to look disinterested as she mopped up the last of her tears and investigated their ravages on her make-up.

"It was to discourage you from thinking Don would ever make you his wife."

There was no attempt to disguise her attention now.

"What do you mean—discourage?" she asked belligerently.



"Don's wife is a gentlewoman. Her voice is low, sweet, and musical. She walks with grace and dignity. She dresses conservatively in very good clothes. She reads books and talks about them intelligently in excellent English."

"You're pretty stuck on her, ain't you?"

"Dodo, I'm only trying to make you see."

"You think that would keep Don from marrying me if he got rid of her? Yes, it would!" But he saw doubt in her derision.

"It would help him decide against it."

"Honest? Give me a cig." He handed her one and watched her hopefully as she lit it without speaking.

"What's the ante in this game of yours?" she asked at last.

"What do you mean?"

"What have I got to do?"

"Oh, just obey me strictly and cut out seeing Don any more."

"I got to see him once more, don't I? To tell him I've quit?"

"I'll attend to that for you. You can write him a letter, to-night or tomorrow. Meantime I'll see him."

"This is his flat. Will I have to move?"

"No, I'll take that over."

"All right, then. I'm game."

He rose, greatly relieved, and held out his hand.

"Good night," he said.

"Going so soon?" She put her hand in his and stood regarding him abstractedly. "Say, Thorpy?"

"Yes."

"I don't remember something."

"Well?"

"Did Donny say you was married or didn't he?"

He took her chin between his fingers and raised her face to his.

"Nothing doing," he said decidedly, suppressing a smile. He noticed with

amusement that her lips were pursed for a kiss and deliberately freed her. "Good night," he repeated and moved away.

"Say, ain't you even going to kiss me good night?" she exclaimed, staring after him.

He winked at her broadly as he put on his hat, but said nothing, and as he closed the outside door after him he heard her dazedly murmur:

"Gard!"

## CHAPTER XI.

Like all people who interfere with the destiny of their fellow men, Thorpe had his moment of regret. It came the next morning and shook to their foundations every belief he ever had in his own judgment, until he felt he would have given much to withdraw from what he had committed himself to. If they had all gone on the rocks for the want of his raising his hand to assist them, at least his responsibility in the catastrophe would have been negative. Now he must blame himself directly for whatever happened.

Much of this self-distrust was due to the fact that he had the unpleasant duty to perform of breaking to Don the news of Dorissa's disloyalty. He realized this when, on his way to Don's office next day, he experienced an intensified desire to withdraw from the whole affair, to leave New York at once, and go back to his nice clean reconstruction work in France.

Don's welcome, as Thorpe entered his private office, was so warm and hearty it was, in truth, the turn of the screw.

"I've stolen Dorissa from you," announced Thorpe to put an end to this friendliness.

"The devil you have," answered Don jovially.

"I mean it, Don. I got her by promising to back a play for her."

Don stared at him, his color deepen-

ing slowly as he began to perceive this was not supposed to be a joke.

"What's the answer? I'll bite," he said uncertainly.

"I'm not kidding," said Thorpe. "She sent me this morning to tell you she's quit."

Don breathed heavily for several minutes.

"What are you up to, anyway?" he asked at last.

"She fascinates me."

"So you think you have the right—" he broke off, speechless. The color had ebbed from his face and his eyes glittered fiercely. "Say," he burst out in a smothered voice, "do you know what you remind me of? A shark, a—shark! And you seem to think I'm your pilot fish. What did you do in South America and Europe all these years without me to pick out the girls you wanted for yourself?"

Thorpe felt himself wither under the attack. His plans and resolutions vanished. If it meant so much to Don—

"Do you really love Dorissa?" he asked unhappily.

"I suppose if I don't, you don't want her," exclaimed Don sarcastically. "'I've stolen Dorissa,' says he," he mocked mincingly. "Cool as you please. And 'Oh, do you love her!' Why do you suppose I see her? You make me laugh. Ha, ha!" he brayed furiously.

His unrestrained and childish anger cleared Thorpe's mind.

"Then you *do* love her?" he demanded evenly. "More than Gladys, of course."

"Who said so?" Don wheeled round on him.

"You were willing that I should steal Gladys."

"For her sake, you confounded cad! How dare you compare the two cases! I thought she wanted you. And I didn't know what you were then. I thought you could make her happy. I thought

—damned fool that I am—that you were decent. A better man than I. God, it's funny!" Again that mirthless laugh.

But on Thorpe's face there was a glow of triumph as he rose and made his way to the door.

"Sorry I've upset you, old man," he said placidly. "But I'd rather steal Dorissa than Gladys." And with this he was gone.

Don made only one attempt to interview Dorissa after her crude note of dismissal reached him. She told Thorpe about it and took great credit to herself for having kept her word and been firm about not seeing him.

"That guy was serious all right," she sighed in conclusion. "I could of had him without half trying if I'd had the time."

"No use trying to play him up as a lost chance, Dodo," said Thorpe. "You'll have fifty better offers to marry richer men than Don if you take my advice and become a great actress first."

She looked at him pensively and he knew she was speculating on her chances with him, for in her category of emotions the fraternal did not exist.

He set to work instantly to try to find a suitable play for her and came face to face with a fact he had not suspected. The quantities of excellent unproduced plays by unknown authors of which he had read and heard so much did not exist. Mediocre drama there was in plenty. One or two good plays came into his hands, but though he had made plain to friends and brokers the particular kind of play he needed, those at all possible were entirely foreign to Dorissa's present powers and type.

It was discouraging work, especially in the face of Dorissa's ready inclination to believe he was putting something over on her. For when he occasionally showed her scripts to prove he

was on the lookout, she failed utterly to see her unfitness to impersonate any of the leads. The high point was reached when one day she staggered him by suggesting an opening for herself in Shakespeare. A girl in the company had a friend who had been backed in a revival of "Romeo and Juliet." Thorpe began to have a faint doubt of being able to supply the patience which would be required of him. Meantime a woman with some knowledge of phonetics, English, and deportment was taking Dorissa in hand every morning. To Thorpe this seemed a herculean task. But the woman cited so many cases in which her methods had worked wonders that he acquired enough optimism at least to hope that Dorissa might not prove her Waterloo. Dorissa herself, once she had accepted the idea that she might be improved, saw enormous progress in herself every day.

"At that Lawson-Abbott party," she told him self-confidently, "people will think me and Mrs. Donny is twins."

She had not given up her act at the Blackwood, refusing to let any occasion for money-making slip by, and now her interest in the Lawson-Abbott party was doubled because of the new light she was getting on social usage.

"Do you know who you ought to of chosen instead of me?" Dorissa asked him one evening when he prepared to leave her at the door of her apartment. "Madge Mallory."

"Why?"

"She's up on all this perfect-lady stuff. And then," she added, narrowing her eyes coyly, "she's more your style in lots of ways."

"Meaning?" Thorpe looked unnaturally innocent.

"Well, for one thing," drawled Dorissa alluringly, "she'd never expect you to kiss her good night."

Thorpe looked her up and down humorously.

"Very well," he said placidly. "Consider yourself discharged to-morrow, and I'll engage her in your place."

She precipitated herself into his arms and clung to him in elaborate repentance.

"Honest I was kidding, Thorpy. You wouldn't throw me down now, would you? I couldn't go back to Don now, and the season's nearly over at the theater, and I'd be out of a job, too. Oh, you wouldn't!"

Back of the exaggeration there was real terror in her voice, a readiness to believe such meanness of him as repelled him even while it aroused his pity for her anew. He patted and reassured her. Then, with an odd glint in his eye, he kissed her good night with a cool and quizzical tenderness which completely baffled her.

One morning about three days before the Lawson-Abbott affair, when Thorpe asked for his mail at the desk on his way to breakfast at his hotel, he felt his pulse leap wildly at the sight of the handwriting on one of the envelopes handed to him. He hardly dared to open it in the public dining room to see what Gladys had to say to him. He read:

DEAR SYD: Perhaps you will think I have no pride at all to be writing to you like this, especially after something you said to me last time you were in my home, and which I am only lately beginning thoroughly to understand. At first I was furiously angry with you, not so much for your rudeness to me, as for the fact that with those words you shattered an ideal of you which I have been cherishing ever since I first met you.

Then I began to see you, too, have the right to be human and suffer deterioration with age and disappointment. I began to see that I myself have had a hand in destroying my own idol. This is why I am humbling myself before you, begging you to tell me how I can make up to you for what is past. Do not suffer from misapprehension any more. Do not satisfy yourself with husks when the fruits are yours for the asking.

Hundreds of times I have regretted that seven years ago I refused to listen to you, and to my heart. What are right and duty

except the right and duty to seek one's own happiness openly and honestly? That is what you taught me, and I am seeing the force of it more every day. Why should I torture myself with silence because of some bugaboo of conventionality?

I know why you have turned to a common woman for consolation. I understand the reason why, of all others, you chose Dorissa Dana, to whom my husband, your chum, is devoted. How complicated our actions seem on the surface, and, on analysis, how simple are all our motives!

You have no need to be jealous of any one, least of all of Don. You have never been out of my thoughts, Sydney. You have but to examine my heart to find it unchanged.

GLADYS.

Thorpe put the letter back in its envelope with fingers which trembled. He made a perfunctory breakfast and retired to his room to reread the letter all over again.

He rallied but little better from the second reading. His most alarming symptom was that he felt a fierce and violent joy to think of Gladys writing those words to him, expressing a longing for him such as he had had for her for so many years. It brought her before his mind's eye, not as he had last seen her, the world-wise, hardened woman, but as the young girl who had so long dominated all his thoughts. The more he pored over the letter before him, the more completely the present Gladys was eclipsed by her, whose image he had worshiped so zealously for seven years. He now believed his friendship with her had been a failure because his love for her had not really been dead. He went further. He came to the conclusion that his brotherly attitude toward Dorissa was due to the fact that his heart was still true to the older, ideal love.

The last few weeks with his elaborate scheme of throwing Don back into her life seemed to him, at the moment, nothing short of bungling unfaithfulness. He hated himself for having judged Gladys superficially, for having, in a way, conspired with Olive against

her. After all, to some extent Olive was to blame, too, for her readiness to believe that he could stop caring for Gladys.

The old foolishness was on him. He longed to hear the voice of his beloved over the telephone. He wanted to go to her directly. He wished to renew the past and the dear pangs of passionate love.

He called her up, and the sweet, languid voice dispelled the vision of the young, fresh girl. It was the sophisticated woman, who laughed so alluringly at his eagerness and put him off with many excuses.

"Come up some day next week for tea. We'll have a lovely talk," she said. "I promise Sheldon Carrol shan't be here. Dear old Syd! I hope for your sake you will catch me in the mood in which I wrote that letter!"

"Isn't it lasting?" he demanded ruefully, feeling ashamed of himself for having taken it all so seriously.

"Would it be half so interesting," she cooed, "if it were?"

When he put up the phone he revived his dashed spirits by rereading her letter. He rather lamely concluded that she was not sure of him—had he himself not reason to be doubtful of his fidelity?—and was using this artificial screen to protect herself.

The inevitable reaction set in. He thought out carefully the prospect of her divorce and what it would mean to him to marry her now. However fundamentally she was the same, there was no dodging the truth that she had altered in many important characteristics. The fact that she could toy with his earnestness was one of them and a genuine note of horror in her voice when he begged her to break a tea engagement that afternoon in order that he might see her.

"With Mrs. Garrison! My dear boy, it simply isn't done!" she had protested immovably.

She had, in fact, showed no compunction about putting off his interview with her until the following Tuesday—five days away!

As the day wore on he was profoundly troubled to discover that the idea of making her his wife grew to seem less and less like the consummation of a dream of happiness and more and more like a duty that he owed to the girl she had been, the necessity of rescuing her from what she now promised to be.

## CHAPTER XII.

The Lawson-Abbott garden party was to take place Sunday afternoon, and Saturday night Thorpe went to the Blackwood to call for Dorissa and submit a play to her which he deemed the nearest thing to being feasible.

For the first time he saw her ill-tempered. She disdained the play and persisted in refusing to see why she could not do a straight emotional lead, and in no very good humor himself, Thorpe told her he was tempted to let her try one for the sake of seeing her wreck her career on the rocks of her own stupid obstinacy. The rebuke had its effect.

"I got a headache and my throat's dry," she informed him self-pityingly in explanation. "Maybe I'm gettin' sick or something."

"Then rest up for a day or two," suggested Thorpe impatiently.

"And miss that party to-morrow? Swell chance!"

"Well, if you feel that way about it, I guess you're not very ill," concluded Thorpe and bade her good night.

He called the next morning to see how she was and to take her to the station as the entertainers went early to the Lawson-Abbott estate to rehearse on the restricted little stage. It was chill and wet weather, and Thorpe found Dorissa in a worse mood than

on the previous night. Her face was flushed and her eyes looked feverish.

"May is a great month for a party, ain't it? Not!" she grumbled. "Wouldn't you think a woman with her money would had more sense? And us dancing on the green, I suppose, wet feet and all. Let us poor girls get sick and die; there's lots more where we come from! I feel rotten already."

"Send word you can't go. You've an understudy, haven't you?"

"Understudy! She dances like a truck horse when she tries to do my act. It's that little Kingsky out of the chorus. Lotta King. You know, the fat thing with the nose. Am I going to let *that* go up to the party and see them swells and get the extra fifty? Yes, I am not."

"Dodo, if it's the extra money, I'll give you a hundred to stay home," said Thorpe, who was worried by her appearance.

"Maybe you'd give me the hundred anyways," she said slyly, with the first dawn of a smile. "Then I'd have a hundred and fifty, see?"

She was in a better humor and apparently felt better when he put her on the train. She was aping and burlesquing Matge Mallory, who took her imitation complacently at its face value when she told her she was studying how to act among the swells.

As the train drew out, her parting words to Thorpe were that he was to be sure to help her identify Mrs. Donny.

It cleared by afternoon and, though the air was still cool and the shrubs and bushes damp, Mrs. Lawson-Abbott had had rugs and carpets laid for the protection of her guests, and the very wetness of the fresh young leaves, sparkling in the sun, added to the beauty of her lovely formal garden. Thorpe motored up alone, wishing he had with him some one who might have enjoyed the misty effects of purple and yellow

and green, filmed with the smoke-blue haze so characteristic of spring. Specifically he was thinking of Olive, who loved motoring and was so alive to the beauties of the road. He had been surprised to hear that she was going to this party, she who so seldom went anywhere. Gladys had told him this the day he had telephoned her. She had refused for Olive and herself his offer to take them up in his car.

"It is impossible to go in a little car like that in the sort of frocks we'll wear. Besides Mrs. Seton Carrol has offered us the use of her touring car. She is using the limousine herself."

"Of course Sheldon is going in the limousine with his mother," Thorpe had suggested sarcastically.

"Sheldon is away just now," Gladys had answered sweetly.

He had realized the justice of her plea concerning her gown and knew the religious zeal with which she would keep any engagement with Mrs. Seton Carrol and so had not attempted to persuade her, though it would have meant much to him then to have had her set her date for an interview a day or two ahead. He was a little surprised to find how much his eagerness to see her had worn off. He did not like the idea that he could get equal, if not more pleasure, from the thought of Olive driving him.

He watched for the Carrol touring car in vain, for he had started rather early in the hope of getting a glimpse of Gladys. In this, too, he was disappointed. However, he was well entertained. He had met Ralph Lawson-Abott, the eldest son of the house, abroad. It was his pleasure and Thorpe's to sit in the sun together on one of the wide brick terraces, recalling the days of mutual dangers and adventure. In this seclusion he nearly missed the beginning of the carefully selected vaudeville which was so special a feature of these May parties every year.

A popular opera singer, a smart playlet, with its cast imported from one of the little downtown art theaters, a famous comedy monologist, and the dancers from the Blackwood, made up the well-balanced program.

Thorpe found himself seeking out Gladys with growing excitement. Perhaps if he had not promised Dorissa to stand beside her he would have put off what must be so significant an encounter until a moment of greater quiet and privacy. He found Olive first, for she still had that strange power to suggest Gladys, though she did not really look like her, and this had attracted him in her direction. He exchanged formal greetings with her and learned from her how he might reach her sister-in-law.

Gladys was seated near the stage. Even among the beautiful and elegant women about her, she seemed to shine. In the gleam of her soft hazel eyes Thorpe thought he saw the woman who had written him that letter, however the fashionable artificiality of her clothes and make-up seemed to proclaim her merely an obedient puppet in a gorgeous show. But a moment or two of conversation with her told him that she was highly conscious of her surroundings and strictly guided by them. She talked fluently with the inconsequential cynicism which in her set passed for wit.

"Everybody seems to be here," she told him once. "I would not have missed it for the world. There's Mrs. Hornaday. You may depend on her to have something to say about us if you keep too constantly beside me. She knows as well as anybody that Dorissa Dana was a rival of mine and that you have taken Don's place with her. She'll say you are aspiring to greater conquests—not knowing how near she is to the actual truth."

"Would you rather I moved away?" asked Thorpe, uncomfortable under



this light reference to what she had treated so seriously in writing to him.

"Would you deprive me of my chance for publicity? Don't you know an actress seeks advertisement by having her jewels stolen because she needs her reputation, while we seek it by having our reputation stolen because we need our jewels? I am crazy to see Dorissa."

"Then why didn't you go to the Blackwood?"

"I lacked the courage. But here she has been flung in my face and I'm eternally grateful to dear Mrs. Lawson-Abott for her consideration. Is she pretty?"

"Dorissa Dana? Yes, but not beautiful."

"And very fascinating no doubt. Of course you know I took no interest in her while she confined her attention to my husband. But it looks now as if she might become a menace. Why don't such women limit themselves decently to the married men and leave the eligible bachelors alone?"

At last the dancers were presented. Thorpe had seen the act several times from behind the scenes as well as that once from the front, since he had taken to visiting the Blackwood. He watched Dorissa carefully, and was astonished to see how superior her dancing was to that of her companions. He had never noticed this before. The blasé gathering around him was awake to it, too, and all eyes seemed to follow her alone of the group on the stage while her name was passed sibilantly from lip to lip. Gladys' upturned profile, however, showed little emotion besides self-conscious satisfaction in her own serenity.

The dance wound itself up in a tempestuous burst of applause from the audience. The little troupe bowed their thanks, and Thorpe knew that now was the time Dorissa's eyes were free to seek his signal. He was therefore

surprised when she made no attempt to do so, and he was further disconcerted to see that she seemed suddenly to have grown awkward and unsure of herself. Was she about to get stage-struck at the very end of her performance? She made a quick movement to make her way past her companions into the wings, stumbled, threw back her head, and with a grace unequaled by any of her studied steps, suddenly sank swiftly, like flowing water, to the floor.

A murmur, swelling to a little roar of sympathy and polite dismay swept through the crowd and broken mutterings of, "She's fainted!" "Exhausted," "I don't wonder," and the like arose on all hands. Some of the guests rose as if intending to offer aid, but the curtain was drawn swiftly to shut out any such disagreeable necessity. The well-bred audience instantly began to disperse, pretending it had all been an illusion, but a man suddenly stepped before the curtain, and with raised hand brought them to a standstill.

"Is there a doctor here?" he asked in a clipped voice, but smiled reassuringly. "One of the dancers fainted."

Two men stepped forward and, with some light comedy, deferred to one another courteously. At last the younger made up his mind to take the case.

"I'll call on you, Doctor Hunt," he said jestingly, "if I need a consultant."

Meantime memory of Dorissa's appearance of illness last night and that morning, and fear of what it portended, robbed Thorpe of all conventionality. He did not stop to excuse himself to Gladys, but rushed through the shrubbery which cut off the stage from the amphitheater, pushing his way through garrulous attendants, and gained the spot where a motley band had gathered about the recumbent Dorissa.

"Oh, Mr. Thorpe," gasped Madge Mallory's voice, frightened completely out of its mellowed affectedness. "Ain't it terrible! I told her not to go on!

She was feeling so bad. She had a chill just before. She thought it was just nervousness. Ain't it awful? I'll bet she's going to be real sick. Oh, I can't hardly look at her!"

Dorissa was not a pleasant sight, with her eyes rolling wildly and her lips muttering unintelligible gibberish and her ghastly make-up adding its share to make her appear like a life-sized, broken toy.

"Get her dressed, Madge, and I'll take her right home," said Thorpe, raising her in his arms. "Where's her dressing room?"

Madge led the way to the flimsy shack in which actresses in various states of dishabille, discreetly covered by cloaks or kimonos, stood aside while Thorpe strode in and deposited Dorissa on an improvised couch.

"I'll go home with you and look after her," Madge was volunteering. "I ain't afraid of sickness and I can nurse pretty good."

"No," said Thorpe, touched by her kindness, "I'll telephone right in to New York from here for a nurse to be at her place and have everything ready. There's really only room for two in my car. You couldn't hold her on your lap all the way in."

"Maybe I could," she said earnestly.

"It won't be necessary," smiled Thorpe. "I'll be back in a few minutes. Get her ready as quickly as you can."

He found a servant who promised to do the necessary telephoning for him and returned to the dressing room. There he discovered the doctor, who met his anxious eyes with resolute cheerfulness.

"Typical flu," he pronounced amiably. "She ought to be in bed at this minute."

"Don't take any chances on her hearing your diagnosis," warned Thorpe in a low voice. "She dreads it so."

"What, flu? Don't blame her. But it's too bad. It won't help her to be

scared. I've sent for some whisky for her. I can't give her a fever reducer while she's at large, so to speak."

"I've got my car out here and will take her right home."

"Give her a chance to rest a bit. Her heart's rather wild. Say half an hour. I'll be back then to see her before you take her." He passed Thorpe his cigarette case and, for the first time, looked at him carefully. "You're Thorpe, aren't you? Sydney Thorpe?" he asked.

"Yes," acknowledged Thorpe and saw the other's tight-lipped smile behind the smoke of his cigarette. "Why?"

"Young Abbott pointed you out to me." Then he patted Thorpe's shoulder. "Don't worry about this little girl," he said consolingly and not without a note of patronage. "She'll be all right. Come and get something to eat."

"Thanks, I shall presently," answered Thorpe coolly.

The doctor gave him another curious look.

"My name's Driscoll," he said after a pause. "In case you need me before the half hour's up." He started off, then stopped and looked back at Thorpe. "You're making a mistake to hang round here," he warned, and added, to soften the remark, "The eats are uncommonly good."

### CHAPTER XIII.

In twenty minutes or so the doctor returned. He found Thorpe sitting beside the couch on which Dorissa lay covered by a steamer rug. She had returned to a sort of listless consciousness, interrupted by short naps, and she clung to one of Thorpe's hands like a frightened child. Madge had dressed her carefully and removed the garish grease paint from her face which she then had treated with a slight, becom-

ing street make-up through which the feverish skin burned ominously.

"I don't think it's nice to look just anyhow," Madge had told Thorpe in superfluous explanation, with a return to her old feeling for elegance of diction, "even if you are ill disposed. I would be grateful if some one administered to me if I was sick. No girl, I think, looks any better for being got up like a fright."

Dorissa's heart action was improved, and the doctor gave Thorpe permission to move her and, with Madge, helped him place her in Thorpe's little machine. As the latter drove around to the front he saw that many guests were already starting to go, hastened by the clouding up of the sky which gave promise of renewed showers.

"I feel fierce," Dorissa complained and repeated for the twentieth time the question which seemed to torture her. "Is it flu, did he say? Did you ask him? Is he sure?"

"You asked him yourself and he said 'No,'" said Thorpe patiently.

"But maybe he'd lie to me. What did he say to you? Huh?"

"He said it wasn't flu," lied Thorpe convincingly.

"Do you think he knows? He's awful young looking. Maybe he don't know nothing. Huh?"

"He's considered a very fine doctor," said Thorpe, bestowing the reputation upon him for the occasion. "But we'll get another, even finer one when we get home."

"Yeah. I'd like a kind of old one. Not too old or he won't know about modern diseases like flu. Say, I don't think this can be flu, do you? I hardly cough at all. I just feel rotten, that's all. Maybe I ate something. Did he think maybe I ate something, huh?"

And so on.

Thorpe kept one eye on the gathering clouds. Though the top of his car

was up and he was well equipped with rubbers, Dorissa was in no condition to risk a wetting. They had gone about half an hour when the first drops began to fall. Fifteen minutes later Thorpe was dismayed to hear things were going wrong with his engine. He could not stop to investigate as the rain had turned into a heavy drizzle which was chill and penetrating. Twenty minutes later, the car suddenly began to cluck at random, diminuendo and, slipping into silence, stalled.

He swore unstintedly and got out. He had neglected to give himself a promised course in motor-car mechanics, and now stood appalled at his own helplessness. As he raised the hood and gazed with ignorant eyes at his engine, hoping the trouble would prove to be some simple affair of a loosened spark plug or the like, he could hear Dorissa's terrified muttering. This would be the death of her. Why didn't he hurry? Didn't he believe she was sick? People got awful things from exposure in the rain. She felt a chill coming on, and then her voice was lost in the chattering of her teeth.

A car was coming down the road, and Thorpe hastily made up his mind this was the time to appeal to strangers. With a gesture he stopped it. It was a touring car with the top up and the rubbers down. He would have preferred something closed, but there was no time to wait for another.

"My machine has gone out of commission," he said in answer to the chauffeur's query whether he needed help, "and I have a friend with me who is ill." Then he stopped. A corner of one of the flaps was turned back and Olive's face peered out at him.

"Syd! Syd Thorpe, what is it?" she demanded.

He explained. The rest of the flap was unhooked and Gladys added her visible presence to the interview.

"We'll take her in here," said Olive readily.

"Wait!" interrupted Gladys sharply.

"Who is it?"

"Who do you think?" asked Olive impatiently. "And does it matter if the girl is ill?"

"Of course it matters," said Gladys, her face white and hard. "Have you been deaf all afternoon? Is there any one who does not know, after the way he has acted? And this is not our car. We have no right——"

"Fiddlesticks!" broke in Olive briskly. "Bring her along, Syd."

"No—no! I won't allow it. This car was intrusted to me. Drive on, chauffeur!" gasped Gladys in panic. "Have you any idea what Mrs. Carrol would say and do if she ever discovered with whom we shared her hospitality?" she added as the driver obediently and with a wooden face started the engine.

Thorpe, his jaw set rigidly, drew back, and without wasting any time in protest looked swiftly down the road for the sight of another car.

"Stop," said Olive peremptorily, "let me out. Maybe I can help. You needn't wait for me, Glad. I'll go home in Syd's car if I can start the engine. If not I'll find something."

"Nonsense! Olive, you are a perfect fool. Come back! See what is happening to your dress. Olive, you are maddeningly ridiculous!" Gladys' voice grew husky with repressed fury as Olive, after a brief struggle with the complicatedly screened doorway, stepped out upon the muddy road. She did look incongruous in her delicate slippers and flimsy wraps, Thorpe reflected, and then he followed her as she walked determinedly over to his uncovered engine.

The Carrol automobile waited uncertainly for several seconds, purring impatiently as Gladys continued to watch and fume. Then, quite suddenly and

evidently in a bad temper at the unlovely character she was presenting, Gladys ordered the man to drive on.

Neither Olive, busy with Thorpe's engine, nor Thorpe, anxiously looking on, had a glance to waste on the departing car.

"Can you manage," asked Thorpe at last, "or had I better hail another party?"

"I think I can patch it up so we can get to a garage," said Olive. "You can try hailing another Samaritan if you like, but," she looked at him a moment gravely, then frowned and turned away, "the trouble is all the people likely to pass just now are from that fool party."

"I'll risk another snub," he replied rather hotly as a big motor car hove in view.

"Wait, I've got it!" cried Olive hastily, and the grateful sound of throbbing machinery greeted his ear. "But you'd better let me drive her while she's cranky. I think I can get you home. Jump in and hold Miss—er—Dana on your lap."

Neither Thorpe nor Olive ever forgot the hour and a half which followed, time in which they lived years in the intimate communion wrought by the near presence of disaster. The rain poured down in torrents now, and the whip and roar of it was in their eyes and ears. Dorissa, in the wave of high fever which followed her chill, again lost consciousness and babbled incessantly, sometimes incoherently, sometimes clearly living over scenes of her hectic young life. At one time she was ordering Thorpe to point out Mrs. Donny to her, scolding him for blocking her view and breaking his promise. Then she grew guilefully loving and informed him with conviction that she would make him marry her. "Yeah, this brother stuff don't go with me. I'm too wise, see? I'll get you yet, honey-bunch, I'll get you yet," she cooed. In-

termingled in all this were terrified calls to Donny, Thorpe, and others, unknown to her hearers, to save her, sometimes from a tangible and definite shape, usually that of her mother, but more often merely "Them." "Don't let them get me!" she would sob with wild hysteria.

Olive helped Dorissa up to her apartment, and when she discovered that in spite of Thorpe's precautions to send for a nurse, none had yet arrived, she prepared the bed, got the patient settled in it, and declared her determination to remain until proper attendance had been secured. In vain Thorpe warned her against the chances of infection. She laughed at what she called his endeavor to scare her away.

When the doctor came poor little Dorissa was no longer able to judge whether he was too young or too old to be skillful enough to save her. He was neither. It was one of those swift, tragic, and merciful cases. She was already blue-lipped when he examined her, and she went out early the next afternoon without regaining consciousness.

The next morning the doorbell of Dorissa's apartment interrupted Thorpe as he was going through an accumulation of untidy scraps and papers belonging to the dead dancer. He was amazed, on opening the door, to behold Olive Hamilton.

"I saw the notice in the paper this morning," she explained, "and I came to see if there is anything I can do."

He drew his hand wearily across his tired eyes, trying to collect his thoughts. He had a vague idea that it was nice but foolish of Olive to have come here.

"Why, no," he said. "Everything's been done. Madge Mallory, a friend of hers, helped me to decide to have her taken to—to parlors for the funeral and we've been going over her things. Madge stayed until I chased her home at four o'clock this morning."

"You've been up all night? And

most likely all last night as well?" asked Olive.

"No, I got a little sleep then on the sofa."

"Couldn't I finish what you are doing so you can go home now and rest?"

"There's not much more to do. You see, she has evidently left quite a lot of property, jewelry, and money. And no vestige of a will. She was saving against poverty in old age, poor little kid! As far as we can make out, she has an estate of nearly ten thousand dollars. She has spoken to Madge of a great-aunt she had in a little up-State village, her mother's aunt, who broke with the mother when she went wrong. Now we're trying to find out what the mother's maiden name was and from Dorissa's rather sketchy records, it seems to have been anything from Levy to Kelly, including the Scandinavian. You see, we'll want to advertise it, to trace that aunt. I have eight possibilities here. I guess we'll have to print them all."

"Don, as a lawyer, ought to be the one to attend to this," said Olive.

"Do you think Mrs. Seton Carrol would permit Gladys to permit him to do so?"

"Don't be so bitter, Syd. She's desperately sorry it proved such a calamitous mistake."

"Mistake? Oh, yes, she has realized the value of her own tenets, that a society woman gains advertisement by risking her reputation."

"You're tired, Syd."

"Perhaps."

"And you have had no breakfast. Do go and get some."

"Why aren't you at the office?"

"I telephoned I'd be late."

He stared at her idly a moment.

"Why don't you fear for your reputation, too?" he demanded. "You are a woman."

"Don understood Gladys, and he's a man," retorted Olive.

"Don, too?"

"Don't look so pained, Syd. You wouldn't if you knew how much it meant to her to have his sympathy. And besides, don't you see what this accomplishes for us?"

"You mean that they are standing together? Some day I may be glad of it. Just now Gladys and her problems are nothing to me. She has more completely gone out of my life than Dodo—Dorissa. She is more than dead. My Gladys never existed."

He spoke apathetically. He was astonished at his own lack of emotion.

"I don't think that is true," replied Olive. "Whether we alter or die doesn't matter to what is past. The thing that counts most, the only thing that really counts in a world that must go forward, is our constructive influence. The world has Gladys to thank for your ideal of her."

"That's too easy and optimistic a theory for me this morning."

"Ah, well, only remember that if the universe means anything at all, good is positive and evil negative—just waste. The best thing to do with waste is to bury it, destroy it, forget it, let it pass. Come out to breakfast," she added practically.

"Yes, I'm in no condition to argue," he smiled.

They went down into the street which was rich in the sunny promise of a new spring day. People swarmed about them, young and old, busy and dawdling. Some girls, badly made up and overgayly dressed, standing near a corner, burst out laughing shrilly. Something about them seemed to Thorpe to be tragically weak and there was a heartrending wistfulness in their vulgarity. The city was full of Dorissas, dreading death and fleeing into its jaws, driven by the allied fear of poverty. Poor little, common, senseless moths! And who are we to judge or pity them? Is life worth more, or better under-

stood in us, for all our pretentiousness? Thorpe shuddered and his hand clutched Olive's arm. He felt himself shaken to the soul by the tranquil passing of one small unimportant life.

"I can guess what it is to lose a friend," said Olive.

"Olive," he said slowly, "I should like you to know something, though I don't see why. Dorissa and I were only friends."

"Yes," she said in a low voice.

"It wasn't any superior morality on my part," went on Thorpe stumbly. "It was just that—that I didn't care for her that way. It surprised me a bit. But I know why now. I wasn't free. I found that out Sunday."

"You mean—Gladys?"

"Yes. When I told you it was all over, I thought it was. I saw she was different, but I went on dreaming, down in my heart, that under it all she was what she had been once. Now I can see she never, even in those early days, was what I thought her. She couldn't have been. The portrait I had made of her was just a fancy picture, an ideal head."

They went on in silence, and in a moment or two reached the entrance of his hotel. Here he stopped and she put out her hand.

"Good-by, and rest up, Syd," she said.

"Aren't you coming in to have breakfast with me?"

"I've had mine. Good-by. I don't suppose we shall see each other much any more."

"Why not?"

"Oh, strained relations with Don and Gladys. It's hardly likely."

"That's so," he said rather dazedly. "Well, good-by. You've been a brick, Olive. Thanks for it."

They shook hands. Her large, smoke-gray eyes looked up at him, shining and holding an expression he could not fathom, being both concentrated and



enveloping. And at this moment of all others she reminded him again of Gladys, the Gladys who had never been, the super-girl on the sands at Mere-mead. The pain of it was almost more than he could bear and he quickly released her hand.

The next minute she was gone.

Two sips of coffee brought light to his befogged mind. It was as though, the mist clearing, he could behold not merely what was present and near, but what was past and distant as well. In the vision of Olive's upraised eyes he saw now, not Gladys, but the ideal he had cherished in his heart for seven years. It never had been Gladys; it had always been Olive and what she stood for, her vital integrity, her enthusiasm, her courage, her tolerance. Olive.

He sprang up, jostling a humbly indignant waiter. Apologetically he muttered, "Important business call!" and rushed headlong to the nearest telephone. Of course Olive had not reached her place of business, and he had to call her up three times more

before he reached her. In the meantime he enjoyed the excruciating torture of believing that he had lost her through his stupidity.

"Olive," he stammered inanely, when he at last made connections, "can you come for a drive and dinner with me to-night, if I call for you at the office? I must see you. I have something most important to say. I didn't realize before—that is—the coffee. I did need my breakfast. Oh, don't refuse me. You will come, won't you, Olive?"

"Yes," came her all but inaudible reply.

"And, Olive"—he babbled on—"say you'll forgive me now, for being so blind."

He heard a click. She had put up the telephone without answering, but not before an odd little sound had reached him, like a laugh or a sob.

They dined far away from Manhattan that night with the sound of the sea in their ears. And Dorissa, having accomplished her destiny, slept peacefully in her strange bed awaiting her last journey.

## MEMORIAM

REMEMBER me as a rose that vanished,  
 A bird that sang in the joy of dew,  
 A breeze of grace that the storm cloud banished,  
 A glimmery candle, love-lit for you.  
 Never as woman, wan and weary,  
 Clinging to cumber your climbing feet—  
 Thank Fate for strength when the way was dreary  
 To smile as you won to the victor's seat.

You won. I lost. Here is no repining—  
 Love and the world walk separate ways—  
 Never my shadow shall dim your shining,  
 Thought of me wither your crowding bays.  
 A rose unshattered, ere yet it vanished,  
 A singing bird in the dawn, the dew,  
 Let me abide till the love you banished  
 Lays on my dead heart a branch of rue.

MARTHA McCULLOCH-WILLIAMS.



# "Jambalaya"

By James Francis Dwyer

Author of "Goliath Gamble and Fate," "Miss Thistledown and Mr. Tinker," etc.

NOW and then a name disappears suddenly from the daily newspapers and we start speculating as to the reason. We don't know the owner of the name, we know only the name. The splendid thing about modern journalism is that it makes us acquainted with thousands of people without our having to make their acquaintance.

Suddenly, some morning as we're riding down on the subway, our eye calls to our attention the fact that the name of Tulkingshorn Leonidas Brown has not greeted us from the printed pages for quite a while. We wonder. We were real friendly with Tulkingshorn, although we wouldn't have known him if he came and sat beside us. But it was a nice name. It used to leap out of the massed names of a committee appointed by the mayor to receive a visiting somebody. It hopped out of political notes, rushed at us from society pages; now and then it was at the foot of a letter to the editor.

"Why," we ask ourselves, "isn't old 'Tulk' on committees nowadays? Why isn't he donating money to churches, sitting in the boxes at opening nights, doing the 'We have with us here this evening' stuff, handing ten-dollar bills to newsboys at some prominent corner where the camera men can get him in a good light. What's up with Tulk?"

Our curiosity prompts us to address a friend sitting near us.

"Haven't seen Tulkingshorn Leonidas Brown's name in the newspapers lately," we remark. "Haven't read anything about him for months."

And our friend will probably remark:

"Brother, this is a big town. I've seen fellers prance all over the front pages for months, and then some duck down in Park Row, where they churn all this bunk up, says 'Bingo!' and the feller can't get in the newspapers again unless he advertises for a lost dog or a maid of all work. And you never know the reason. This is some big town. Well, good-by, I get off here."

And with this introduction we come to Mr. Ronald Gurney who is the particular Tulkingshorn Leonidas Brown of this story. It was way back in 1890 that newspaper men discovered that they could make a paragraph about Ronald Gurney with half the effort they would use in dragging some other person into print. Gurney had a name that looked as if it should be in the daily newspapers. It was as much at home there as the date line. Like royalty it paid for the honor by its presence.

Ronald Gurney was always doing something and doing it in a manner which interested the public. If at some unusual moment he had no *communique* to issue, he intimated in a mysterious manner that the morrow, like the pack of Buddha, bulged with extraordinary happenings.

"To-morrow," he would remark. "Ah, to-morrow! The gods are fashioning it. I hear their little hammers molding the moments!"

"Why, what'll happen, Mr. Gurney?" the wide-eyed press would ask.

"Ah," he would murmur, "that is not the question. What will not hap-

pen is a question which I could more accurately answer. Let us wait in the shadow of big events."

And, if the big events did not arrive, the editors knew that Ronald Gurney's remarks about their possible arrival made good reading matter. Years later there arose in our Babylon a man who paid thousands for full-page advertisements recording his prophecies—a lot of which, by the way, didn't "proph" to any great extent—but Ronald Gurney's little hints which were printed without cost to him were more successful than the big advertisements of the latter-day prophet.

Gurney had a faculty for wrapping the pill. The editors knew it was a pill, but they were good sports and they recognized a brilliant craftsman. He flattered them by cuffing his brains to find a splendid verbal raiment in which to hide something which should have gone in the advertising columns. Some of his remarks in the last decade of the century were decidedly witty. And they made money for Mr. Gurney. He had a belief that while he kept before the public, the public naturally kept behind him.

Ronald Gurney made a lot of money. He was the leader in the Crammle Pool, the promoter of the Queen of Sheba properties—he remarked that in this matter Solomon sought the Queen instead of the Queen seeking Solomon—and he was the active spirit in the Guatemala Grab Bag, regarding which he shrewdly remarked that the only difference between the United States powers that be and those of Guatemala lay in the fact that the authorities of Guatemala were harder to reach.

"You see," he added hurriedly, "my residence is in New York, and Guatemala is a long way from New York."

Ronald Gurney was much to the front in matters which had no connection with stock gambling. He took an interest in the city government; he

remarked once that we kicked a lot about Tweed, but we had been getting worsted for a long while. He and his beautiful wife were well-known figures at Broadway shows; he ignored head waiters till they groveled before him. It was Ronald Gurney who remarked that "the captains and the kings depart but, God help us, the head waiters stay!"

And then, several years later, one damp bleak fall, Ronald Gurney's name disappeared from the columns of the New York dailies. The reporters did not record his doings, his sayings, his prophecies concerning the morrow. After a time the subway folk, who only knew him as a name, questioned one another as they slid down the roaring Eighties and Sixties and Forties.

"By the way," they would scream, trying to match their lung power against the underground orchestra, "where has this fellow Gurney gone? I don't read anything about him nowadays."

And the person whose ears were severely taxed to gather in the question would reply:

"You've got me, bo. You can be a right-hand column maker to-day and a Pinkerton detective couldn't find you to-morrow in this burg. What's that the poet says, 'Where are the bo's of yesterday?' Probably Gurney has eloped with his stenog or taken the route to Woodlawn via the mortuary chapel. Or South America. They tell me this place Buenos Aires is some hot spot. Well, good-by, I get off here."

There is a portion of the State of Louisiana which holds the medal for being the least-known section of this wonderful country of ours. That is, it is the least known to the people of the United States who reside more than fifty miles from its boundaries. It wallows in its national obscurity, so to speak. Every schoolboy knows of Death Valley, of the lonely stretches of

Arizona and Montana, but what can he tell you of Barataria? Nothing! Probably not one person in a thousand can give the sketchiest information concerning that fifty-mile stretch of swamp country threaded by wonderful bayous which lies between New Orleans and Grand Isle. Ask your schoolboy who and what are the Cajuns. He cannot answer. Yet Barataria is a wonderful place, a place of historic interest, a wonderful hunting ground, a place of treasure-trove and adventure.

Heading down the Mississippi—and it was by the water route that Ronald Gurney came to the Land of Dreams—the seeker after the Free State of Barataria, will, when he approaches the city of New Orleans, hug the flat bank opposite the town until he finds the unpretentious lock through which he enters Harvey's Canal. An old-fashioned lock which is a gateway to a sylvan paradise.

Ronald Gurney passed through the lock a few weeks after the New York newspapers ceased to publish stories of his doings. He came through in a rickety house boat propelled by an antiquated engine which started when it received a hard and swift kick on the flywheel, and with him were a baby boy of two months and an old woman nurse.

"What's below?" he asked the lockman.

"Well," said the lockman, "you'll drift down the canal for about two miles and then you'll turn into Bayou Barataria, and you can keep on past Fleming's and Fisher's right on to Grand Isle. Ever been this way before?"

"No," answered Gurney.

"Well, it's a great place," said the lockman. "There's turtle and fish a plenty; shrimps and ducks, an' garfish as big as sharks, an' there's deer and muskrats, an' Spanish moss an' Cajuns. An' sometimes there's storms. A fellow named Hearn wrote a story about a big storm they had down here.

The old Gulf of Mexico started up to look at N'Awlyns an' ran the whole fifty miles afore they stopped her."

"I read the book," said Ronald Gurney. "It brought me down here. It's by Lafcadio Hearn."

"I guess that's it," said the lockman. "John Romero, down at the bridge, has it. But this is a great country 'cept for one thing."

"The mosquitoes?" laughed Gurney.

"You said it, friend," said the lockman. "Old Jean Lafite, the pirate, lived down here an' quite a lot of the Cajuns are still rooting in the shell mounds after his treasure, but those skeeters are worse than old Jean ever knew how to be."

"Well, I'll take a chance," smiled Gurney. "I want a place where there are no newspapers, no subways, no trains, and no noise."

"Enter," said the lockman, as he signaled the visitor to go ahead into the canal. "This is the spot that hits on every cylinder."

So Ronald Gurney and his baby boy entered Barataria. The old house boat drifted down the lily-covered bayous, hailed occasionally by the crew of a lugger bound for Grand Isle where they form the terrapin for the Chicago market, hailed in the soft Creole French of the Cajuns. Past the tumble-down shacks of the Spanish-moss gatherers and pelt getters, on into the green-matted wilderness over which reigns the peace of God.

"*Le bon Dieu* provides," say the Cajuns. "He breeds zee leetle shrimp an' ole man turtle an' ze muskrat. An' zee beeg garfish am His, too. Golly, yes!"

Below Fleming's the house boat halted! Ronald Gurney surveyed the bank, and decided that it was a good place. He tied the old vessel to the battered knee of a dead mangrove and carried his baby ashore.

"I'm giving you a good start," he

muttered as the child snuggled against his shoulder. "This is a place a king can't buy."

The years rolled away. Soft years full of sweet sunshine. The house boat, very old and very tired, settled down into the soft black mud, the shack on the bank receiving the three occupants.

Ronald Gurney fished and hunted. Young Ronnie grew up strong and healthy. A splendid place for youth is Barataria. Over it flies the old gold flag of romance. Up those bayous years ago came Jean Lafitte and his men to help Jackson turn the British back from New Orleans. A patriotic pirate if ever there was one. And somewhere in that mysterious stretch running down to Grand Isle is, so rumor says, the bullion which Jean stored away for the time when he should leave the gentle art of pirating and conform to the laws of civilization. Alas for old Jean! He, like most pirates, died suddenly and unexpectedly, and his treasure makes dream material for Cajun minds.

Great friends were Ronald Gurney and his son. Companions in hunting and fishing, the boy listening intently to the stories which his father told of places he had seen. Stories of New York interested the boy. He loved to hear of its skyscrapers and subways, of its great hotels, of its endless turmoil and stress.

"But I don't think I would like it," he would murmur. "Down here there is quiet. Yes, and a lot of fun."

"No fishing in New York," the father would say. "At least you can't fish from your doorstep like we can here. No hunting, either."

"It must be awfully dull," was young Ronnie's comment. "I don't know what I should do there. Why do people stay in the place?"

"They like it, Ronnie. At least some of them like it. They like the fuss and the glitter and the pomp of the big

hotels. They'd be awful lonely if they were taken away to some place like this. Then there are others——"

Ronald Gurney paused and his gaze wandered off across the bayou to the green wall of mangroves on the opposite bank. A little wave of memory-made pain passed across his face.

"Yes," prompted the boy, "what about those others?"

"Well they stay because—because some one else likes the place and—and the other person wouldn't be happy in some other spot."

"That's a queer reason for staying in a place like New York."

"Well, it's generally some one they love."

"Oh!"

The two were silent for a moment, then the leap of a big garfish roused the boy from his dreams.

"I guess I'd have to love some one a whole lot to stay in a place like that," he said quietly. "No hunting, no fishing, and the people all jammed together like shrimps in a can."

The man smiled.

"I suppose they do," he said. "I suppose they love them a lot."

After a little pause he added:

"Of course they get a return. The people who love New York and who are responsible for keeping those who don't love it in the city are grateful, I suppose. And gratitude is a lot. Why, their gratitude might be so splendid and wonderful that a man who wanted to go to some place where he could fish and hunt would never let his desires be known."

The boy considered this remark for a long minute.

"I don't know any reward, gratitude or anything else, that could pay me for living there," he said. "The noise would drive me mad. And the thousands of men and women rushing up and down the streets would be awful. I find Harvey's pretty tiring and New Orleans

is horrible, but if I lived in New York I'd go mad in twenty-four hours."

Into the wonderful chalice of youth, that those sun-fed years filled, were beautiful contributions from the father. Ronnie knew of a mother, a splendidly beautiful mother, so beautiful that his father could not talk of her. He knew of her not from words, but from silences. He knew of her not from gestures describing her beauty, but from little waves of pain brought to the man's face by the remembrance of her beauty. Her picture was printed upon his mind by a negative of silence, a silence nursed and encouraged by the sweet stillness which hung over the jade-green bayous. Curiously he didn't know her name. She had no name. She was a sweet and soft dream woman who had slipped away suddenly into the great unknown.

He wondered often how he knew so much of her and why he knew so little. The man did not speak, but the boy knew why he did not speak. Speech brought pain, but in the silence that sits, so the Cajuns say, like *le manteau du bon Dieu* upon the *chenieres*, there came a heavenly sent solvent which made the man's dreams clear to the boy.

Young Gurney passed from his teens. At twenty he was a tall, supple boy with the activity of a tiger cat, a dreaming face which possessed fine possibilities. He loved the bayou-threaded wilderness; he knew every twist and turn of the waterways which run like green girdles through the massed mangroves.

Very different from the old Gurney house boat was the well-appointed and cheery motor cruiser which nosed to the lock of Harvey's Canal on a splendid morning in May. She was the *Jimjam*, of Pittsburgh, a splendidly built and compact boat, with cabin accommodations for six, a sixty-horse-power engine, and a capacity for sneaking over sand

bars and "ripples" which had annoyed the Ohio and old Mississippi. She had made the long journey from Price's Yard at the foot of Federal Street, Pittsburgh, to New Orleans, and now, tired of sand bars, snags, and the continuous and never-ending rocking accorded to little boats by the ugly stern wheelers of the two rivers, she sought a peaceful haven. So the sun-tanned captain hailed the lock and asked some questions.

It was the genial Colonel Harvey himself who answered the questions of the captain and owner.

"Come in and see Barataria!" the colonel cried. "No laws, no taxes, and old Lafitte's gold lying loose for the gink that's bright enough to find it."

So out of the broad river into the canal came the saucy *Jimjam*, her little company upon her deck. There was the owner and captain, Henry Z. Dennison, of New York; his wife, a fine matronly lady who loved the open and was quite a hand on a boat; the daughter of the pair, Claire Dennison, a beautiful girl of nineteen; the engineer, one "Sop" Gordon of the Great Lakes; the Chinese cook, Ah Song, who always cried when the boat approached the gigantic locks of the Ohio, and, last but not least, a friend of the Dennisons, one Chudley Warner Fesk, who had begged permission to be taken on the trip and who had made old Henry Z. regret his soft-heartedness a million times on the way down. Mr. Fesk was twenty-three years of age, and he was the possessor of a past unsullied by a single record of a dollar earned by effort. His looks would hardly convince a close observer that he was going to turn into a human coining plant in the immediate future, but the future seemed a woolly mattress to Chudley. He wrote verse, indifferent verse, he played the ukulele, and he danced amazingly well, and on the long trip down the rivers he had come to the conclusion that



Claire Dennison would make a fine means of transferring a bunch of the Dennison wealth to his pockets to provide against the days when the elder Fesk would revolt against the monthly toll imposed by his son.

"Why did we bring him?" Henry Z. would groan when he was alone with his wife.

"Not *we*," the lady would answer. "Why did *you* bring him?"

And Henry Z. would fret and fume and try to reconstruct his mental condition on that evening at the Fort Pitt Hotel when the light-brained Chudley had begged permission to come. It worried him. It made him think that the Dennison brain had moments when it backfired in a manner which was likely to wreck the peace and comfort of his old days.

Miss Claire Dennison, who was under the fire of Chudley's ukulele and fountain pen—he serenaded her every evening and presented her with a sonnet each morning—did not proclaim her opinions. She was a sweet, soft-voiced girl, and, although utterly lacking in conceit, she received Chudley's verses and twanging without letting Chudley think that her heart was on the point of running up the surrender flag. Sometimes her calm under his literary and musical bombardment worried the fool. Once she had annoyed him immensely by giving Ah Song one of the sonnets to read—Ah Song was studying English. The Chinaman remarked that it was "velly good," and Claire reported the criticism to the poet. Chudley considered leaving the boat at once—the *Jim-pam* was lying in the Big Sandy River near Catlettsburg—but he changed his mind and unpacked his suit case. Henry Z. Dennison was worth many dollars.

The *Jim-pam* nosed her way down the canal, a haughty, aristocratic boat compared to the shrimp luggers and patched-up Cajun craft. She worked her way cautiously along the bayous,

old Henry Z. repeating to himself the instructions given to him at the lock.

"It's hard to tell where we're going down here, mother," he remarked to Mrs. Dennison. "These bayous are all alike. And I'll wager a new cent that this lily junk is going to foul our wheel before long."

It's easy to keep to a river course, but the bayous of Barataria require a navigator born and bred in the big swamp-land. Henry Z. took a wrong turning when halfway between the huge drainage plant and Fleming's, and from that moment he was lost. The *Jim-pam*, utterly disgusted with the floating lily pads which tried to impede her progress, pip-pipped through a network of green rivers which crisscrossed in a most bewildering manner, then at a point where the voyagers had a choice of five different routes, Henry Z. Dennison decided to call a halt.

"What's wrong?" drawled Chudley, as he ambled up to the disgusted captain. "Jolly pretty scenery, isn't it? I was just pointing out the Spanish moss to Claire."

"You'll have plenty of time to admire it," growled Dennison.

"How's that?" asked the asinine Chud.

"Why, confound it!" screamed the angry captain, "we're lost! Do you understand? We're lost! L-o-s-t. Lost!"

"Oh," murmured Chudley. "Oh!"

There was no current and no wind. An extraordinary silence was upon the great stretch of swampland, and the company of the *Jim-pam* strained their ears to catch the pip-pip of a Grand Isle shrimp or the hoot of the big steamer which hauls the logs up from the wastes to the Louisiana Lumber Company at Harvey's. But no sound came to their ears.

It was Claire Dennison who sent the first call for help into the green wilderness. Her clear voice went out into the

silence like a splendid shaft of sound, and the company of the *Jimpan* waited.

No answer came. The voice went out into a great void; they pictured it going on and on over the silent mangroves till its strength was exhausted. Mr. Chudley Warner Fesk thought her attempts ridiculous.

"We haven't seen any one for hours," he said. "No shacks or signs of hunters. You are only tiring yourself."

"But I like to try," she protested. "I feel—I feel that some one will answer me. I have a strange belief that—that some one is coming within range of my voice!"

And then, after the girl's voice had gone out on a score of unavailing quests, there came an answer. A strong hail floated in from the swamps, and the company listened intently. Even Ah Song cupped his ears while his slant eyes glittered with excitement.

The others remained silent. It was Claire who exchanged call for call with the unknown, slowly approaching through the mangrove thickets. It was a little thrilling, a little weird. The girl's cheeks were flushed, her eyes were bright.

Nearer and nearer came the voice. Very close to the *Jimpan* now. They could hear the unseen one breaking through the underbrush and they stared expectantly at the green wall.

And then, with a suddenness which startled them, a supple, tall young man dived through the leafy wall and stood upright upon the edge of the bayou! A very romantic and dashing young man. A graceful fellow who looked like a young god of the wilderness as the westering sun fell upon his face and figure.

For a full minute he stood without speaking, his fine brown eyes fixed upon the face of Claire Dennison; then he quickly shifted his rifle to the left hand,

took off the rakish felt hat, and addressed the girl.

"I thought you were in trouble," he said. "Could I do anything? My name is Ronnie Gurney and I live with my father on Bayou Barataria."

It was a wonderful week that followed the afternoon on which Ronnie Gurney rescued the *Jimpan* from the mangrove maze. The engineer discovered, when the motor cruiser was abreast of the Gurney shack, that the stumps of the uncharted lanes had injured the blades of the propeller, and he decided that a little cove immediately opposite Ronnie's home would be a good place in which to make repairs.

Spring was on the wonderland of mangrove and reed beds, of lily-covered stretches and lanes of jade. Henry Z. Dennison, a keen sportsman, got out his rifle and went off into the unknown with Ronald Gurney; Mrs. Dennison found delight in walking along the duckboards of "Barataria Number Two" and chatting with the homely Cajun folk. Ronnie taught Claire how to hook the big gar; Ah Song, an Oriental Oscar in his way, found that the old negress in the Gurney home could make dishes which he had never even heard of, and he took notes. Creole dishes that would tempt an anchorite! Shrimp gumbo! Ah Song wrote it down laboriously as the colored woman dictated.

"Fust you scald an' peel de shrimp," she explained. "Den put de lard in de kettle an' add de flour. When de'se brown add de onion chopped an' de bit o' passley, an' when dese is brown add de bay leaf, put in de two quarts ob de likker in which de shrimp am boiled an' let it all boil real well. 'Bout five minutes 'fore de gemmen want to eat, put in de shrimps an' a leedle bit o' file which am powdered sassafras, an' some salt an' pepper an' dere you is. If you hab no file you use de akra."

Ah Song labored hard. The negress was opening up a new world to him, and he struggled manfully to understand her dialect.

And there was *court bouillon à la Creole*, the glory of the gods! Court bouillon of red snapper that, once eaten, will be remembered when half the world is between the eater and old Louisiana! Here is how the negress carelessly tossed her information to the Chinaman:

"To make de co' bouillon de redfish am cleaned an' sliced. Den you make a *roux* ob one tablespoonful ob lard an' two ob flour; whizzle dem to keep dem from burnin'. Now listen! You put in de *roux* twelve allspice, some sprigs ob chopped thyme, passley, bay leaf, an' sweet marjoram; one clove ob garlic an' one big onion chopped small. Six whoppin' tomatoes goes in den an' a cup ob claret an' a quart ob water. When all dis hab boiled five minutes pop in old Mister Redfish wib de juice ob a lemon an' let him hop roun' till he am tender an' soft. Dat am co' bouillon à la Creole an' it am de best dish in de world."

And there were other dishes. *Calas! Belle Calas! Tout chaud!* The rice cake of the old Creole days that the Cala woman with her old bandanna tignon, guinea-blue dress, and white apron vended in the French quarter of old New Orleans! And *jambalaya! Jambalaya aux crevettes!* Ronald Gurney himself made the *jambalaya* for his distinguished visitors! And *salmi de canards sauvage à la Creole!* What a dish!

They ate with gusto, those Northerners, all except Chudley Warner Fesk. Chudley elected to sulk during that week. On the first day that the *Jim-pam* was moored opposite the Gurney shack Chud had passed through an unfortunate experience. He, like Claire, had put himself under the tutorship of Ronnie Gurney in the matter of big gar-

fishing, but unluckily for Chudley, he had gone to sleep with the line twisted round his wrist. An old gar, as strong as a water buffalo, took the bait, and next instant Chudley was in the bayou, his ears, as he went under, absorbing the merry laughter of Claire! It was Ronnie Gurney who rescued Mr. Fesk, paddled him to the bank, and helped to strip the lily pads from his head and shoulders. The gar with the line and bait was on his way to Grand Isle.

"I'm sorry," said Ronnie. "They're strong, very strong, and that fellow caught you asleep. But you'll catch one."

"I'll catch nothing!" interrupted Chudley. "Mind your own business and leave me alone! You're glad that happened to me."

Poor Chudley! He took no further interest in sport, leaving Ronnie and Claire together during the long, sweet days. Mr. Fesk sulked. Each morning he took a wad of paper and sought a nook under one of the grand old oaks in Fleming's Cove, and there he wrote verse for the remainder of the stay. Sad, sad verse which he did not show to Claire. It was verse concerning Barataria, and it was no way flattering to the land of Jean Lafitte. Henry Z. Dennison found a scrap of it flying across the reed beds, and the old man read it with amazement upon his suntanned face. It ran:

O wilderness of slime!  
Where moss hangs from each bough like  
ghostly beards,  
Here do I breathe a prayer!

"Great jumping catfish!" muttered Henry Z. "What's up with the fellow? I'll be lucky if I get him back to New York without buckling a strait-jacket on him!"

There came a day when Sop Gordon reported the *Jim-pam* as ready to sail. The Dennisons bade farewell to the two Gurneys, the Chinese cook with his

bundles of recipes said "Goo'-by" to the negress, and with Chudley Warner Fesk sulking in the cabin, the little cruiser slipped away down the bayou, knifing the green-jade waterway to inlay a silver ripple which widened as she went her way.

The Gurneys, father and son, watched the boat till it turned a far bend, then the man looked at the son.

"Well?" he asked.

"The bayou seems lonely," said Ronnie quietly. "This is the first time I ever thought that a city would be a pleasant place to live in."

The father smiled and turned toward the shack. The odor of crab *jam-balaya* floated out on the air, but Ronnie's nose did not detect the aroma.

Ronnie Gurney went up to N'Awlyns. The silence of the bayou proved too much for him. His father nodded his head and approved.

"I understand," said the elder Gurney. "I expected it."

So Ronnie took a grip and hailed a passing lugger whose steersman nosed in carefully till the distance was such that the supple youngster could leap on the deck. As there are no roads in Barataria, a boat ride is never refused.

Months rolled away. Gurney, senior, fished and hunted. Now and then came a letter from Ronnie. There came post cards from the Dennisons. From Atlantic City, Newport, Lenox, and the Great Lakes.

Then came a morning in a new spring when a lugger bound for Grand Lake slackened speed before the Gurney shack and the skipper tossed a *Times Picayune* to the bank.

"Piece about your boy in the paper, Mister Gurney," shouted the sun-tanned captain. "Thought you'd like to read it. Colonel Harvey told me to tell you Ronnie's just boostin' this skeeter country to beat the band."

Gurney, senior, read the article and grinned. The grin widened. It became a chuckle, then an uproarious guffaw which brought the negress hurrying to the front.

"Fore de Lawd I thought you hab gone crazy!" she cried. "What am de matter?"

"It's Ronnie," answered Gurney. "He's formed a company to boost Barataria. He's going to do everything, or at least his company is. They'll help the shrimpers and the moss gatherers and the pelt getters; building hunting camps and goodness knows what."

"Well, dat am good," said the colored woman. "I sees nothink to laugh at in dat."

"No, there isn't," grinned Gurney. "The thing is that he's handed this reporter a lovely line of junk. It's the sort of stuff I handed out years ago. Oh, holy macaroons! Did I ever read the like? Go away, Louise! Go away and let me laugh in peace!"

Ronnie Gurney formed his company. The father watched the papers closely. The same old Gurney methods. Publicity for nothing. Witty remarks that made talk. Drowsy old New Orleans, "the city care forgot," began to hear about Barataria, about the wilderness which lies at her very door, but which she ignores. Ronnie Gurney knew the family habits of every bird, animal, and insect which existed between Harvey's and Grand Isle, and he told of those habits in a way that made reporters listen.

"Who is this Gurney fellow?" men would ask each other as the morning cars streaked down St. Charles Avenue to the big office buildings in Baronne and Camp and Carondelet Streets.

"He's boosting Barataria," some one would answer. "Doing it good, too. Says it's an American Venice if they could get rid of the mosquitoes and the cottonmouths. And the funny thing is that people believe him. He's

got the Channel Trust Company behind him."

Great fun for Gurney, senior! Sitting on the veranda of his shack he read of Ronnie's doings with delight. He mentioned the matter to a photograph, a faded photograph which he kept in a secret drawer beside his bed. It was the portrait of a sweet-faced woman, and Gurney, senior, thought he detected a smile upon her face as he whispered of Ronnie.

He found a verse in a magazine and read it to the photograph. The verse ran:

The tracks our fathers trod are ours,  
We go the same old route.  
The tree knows nothing more nor less  
Than each green tiny shoot.

The company was a success. Ronnie Gurney made money. Bigger fields called him now.

"Father, I'm going to New York," he announced. "I've got a chance, and I'm going to take it. Mr. Henson wants me. He thinks I've—I've got a faculty for getting a lot of newspaper advertising without paying for it. I don't know whether or not he's right, but I—well, I want to go."

"Good luck," said Gurney, senior.

Down to the quiet bayou in Barataria came clippings concerning Ronnie Gurney. Not sent by Ronnie. A modest young man was Gurney, junior. But a young lady who had seen Barataria and who had been rescued from the silent water lanes by a youth who stepped out of the mangroves in answer to her call for help, scissored clippings from the metropolitan dailies and mailed them down to the shack in the moss-hung silences.

The old Gurney method, but better done. A thousand times better done, thought the father. He repeated some to the negress and told her she had a head of ebony because she couldn't understand the point.

"Dat's all very well fo' peoples as

hab eddycation," she protested, "but po' folk doesn't unnerstand. What's all dat 'bout Master Ronnie bein' de Lou-Lou bird from Louisiana Ah wants to know? Yes, sah! An' what am dis stuff 'bout de League ob Pieces ob Hate?"

"Why it's—it's—oh, go away!" cried the proud father.

The negress protested.

"When Master Ronnie was in dis shack he talked like me an' you," she cried, "but since he's gone up dere 'mongst de No'therners he talks nearly as 'telligible as dat yaller chink who was on Miss Claire's boat."

"Ronnie mentions Ah Song in a letter that came this morning," said Gurney, senior.

"Huh?" snorted the negress. "Did Master Ronnie speak to dat low-lived 'scallion?"

"Yes, he saw him at Mr. Dennison's house. Why, I thought you liked him."

"Thought Ah liked him?" snorted the colored woman. "No, sah! Ah did not like him! Dat yaller 'scallion said he would give me de makin's ob a dress if Ah told him de way Ah make co' bouillon an' *jambalaya* an' *calas*, an' hab Ah got de dress? Ah hab not! Seems ter me dat when folks go up 'mongst der No'therners dey 'most go crazy. Dat stuff Master Ronnie is chuckin' roun' to paper mens makes me think Ah'm 'most crazy. You think it am funny when he says dat Barataria will always be wet. What am funny in dat? Ob course Barataria will always be wet, dat is, 'less der good Lawd make it ober ag'in an' give an old nigger some dry tracks to walk on when she hab nothin' to do in de kitchen."

"Oh, go away!" cried Gurney, senior.

"I want to laugh."

More clippings from Claire Dennison. Enthusiastic letters from Ronnie. In one he wrote:

DEAR DAD: Talked with a man named Harry Spencer yesterday. He knew you!

Said: "Why, you're Ronald Gurney's son! What's your father doing now?" I looked at my watch, made a comparison of time, and said: "*Jambalaya*, I guess." "*Jambalaya*," he repeated. "I never heard of that on the market, but I bet if Ron Gurney is behind it it's hot stuff!" Affectionately,

RONNIE.

P. S.—I'd give a lot to see you to-day!

More letters. Little hints of wondrous happenings. The man in New York began to hunger for the face of the hermit on Bayou Barataria; the hermit cursed the slowness of the mails.

Then on a May morning there came a letter. A short but wonderful letter, reading:

DEAR DAD: Come up and see us married. Wire me from New Orleans. Claire wants you, too!

RONNIE.

So Ronald Gurney, senior, rode up from the sweet Southland to the city from which he had fled more than twenty years before. The trip brought a million memories back to him. They crowded in on him as the train roared through New Jersey in the soft evening light. His mind went back to the conversations he had had with Ronnie when Ronnie was a small boy. He smiled as he recalled Ronnie's inability to understand why men lived in New York while there were places where they could hunt and fish. He recalled his explanations given again and again.

"Why, Ronnie, their love for their wives and their friends is so great that they are willing to forget their own longings for the hunting and fishing grounds."

And there was always Ronnie's reply:

"I guess I'd have to love some one an awful lot before I'd stay in a place like that just to please them."

Well, love had brought Ronnie from the bayous and chained him to the wheel of commerce! It would hold him there, too. That was the fate of man. It was a woman who first swept out the cave, who put the first wolf skin on the

floor, who made her primitive spouse wipe his feet before entering!

Ronald Gurney, senior, speculated further as the train dashed into the Hudson tunnel. Why, it was the women who had made communities, who had killed the nomadic instinct, deep-seated in man. They wanted settled homes where they could have children and comfort. It was the women who had built cities, great cities, who held their foolish, irresponsible husbands to the great work of progress!

The train roared into Pennsylvania Station and Ronald Gurney, senior, rose to his feet. He was curiously elated, thrilled by the memories which had crowded in upon him.

"I suppose," he murmured, "I would never have left New York if Mollie had lived. She loved the warmth of the city like a cat loves a fire."

He stepped from the car, and Ronnie fell upon him with a whoop of joy.

"Dad! Dear old dad!" he shouted. "Come over here! This way! I left Mollie by the stairs!"

Gurney, senior, gripped the arm of his son and held it tightly.

"You left who?" he cried. "Who is Mollie?"

"Why, what's wrong?" asked the boy. "Here she is! It's Claire, but I call her Mollie because—because I always thought it a sweet name."

The father took Claire Dennison in his arms and kissed her, then, still holding her tightly, he spoke to his son.

"Ronnie, I always called your mother Mollie," he said softly. "I never told you before. It was a little secret between us."

The dinner of welcome was at the Dennison home. Henry Z. Dennison wished to do honor to the man who had fed him Creole dishes in Barataria.

A wonderful dinner it was. Henry

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Z. heading the table with Ronald Gurney, senior, on one hand and Claire on the other. They were all very delighted and happy; Ronnie thought that Claire was more beautiful than an angel. For her he would not only live in New York, but he would work and struggle till he owned the whole city, so that he could hand it to her as a present in payment for a kiss.

The father noticed the look on his son's face and smiled.

"New York seems good, Ronnie, eh?" he said.

"Good?" cried Ronnie. "Why, dad, there's no place in the world like it. It's—it's heaven, that's what it is!"

And then, while they all laughed at

Ronnie's enthusiasm, the pompous butler stood aside, and into the dining room, bearing a huge silver tureen, and smiling from ear to ear, came Ah Song, the Chinese cook of the *Jimpam*!

He put down the tureen, and, with his slant eyes upon the guest of honor, he lifted the cover. The glorious odor of *jambalaya* filled the room!

"Great Scott!" cried Ronnie's father "Say, that's splendid!"

"He wanted to make it in your honor," explained Henry Z., "so I told him to carry it in personally. Tell Mr. Gurney what you call it, Ah Song!"

"Me call him *dambalaya*," said the delighted Chinaman. "*Dambalaya* velly goo'!"



## CUP OF A MODERN CELIA

OH, pictured cup from which the soft perfumes,  
Like incense from some gold-wrought urn of old  
Arise and frolic with my Celia's smiles,  
And leave their fragrance round her hair of gold!

Fingers so white that touch the handle small,  
Those eyes of dreamy brown that smile for me  
O'er the bizarre chalice of Arabia's sweet,  
As mystic lamps across a mystic sea!

Oh, tiny, painted cup, so thin and frail,  
Ornate with gold and purple, red and blue,  
Your place in this great world is very small,  
But mine I gladly would exchange with you.

Vassal to her for whom my heart doth long,  
Held by miladi's velvet finger tips,  
Oh, but a moment of your little life,  
One moment, as you meet those scarlet lips!

FREEMAN HARRISON.



# SAPPHO'S SONG

By

JOSEPH NOEL

**T**HE tenor voice is more than a disease; it's a temperament.

Though the vocal chords vary from atrophy to Caruso, the tenor temperament as such is immutable. Once it finds itself on the dangerous side of adolescence, its implications and inhibitions are as fixed as the reactions of a chemical formula.

Thus the temperament may not permit maidens to be without love. It may not allow them to be distressed by fathers and mothers who want them to get up before noon and wash the breakfast dishes. It may not suffer them to go abroad without a cloak of fashionable cut when the weather threatens.

Robert Burns had the temperament, though history records that his voice, like other things about the poet, was not all it should have been. But that didn't keep him from singing:

Oh, wert thou in the cauld blast  
On yonder lea,  
My plaidie to the angry airt,  
I'd shelter thee.

Plaidies were the fashionable gear of Scotland when Robert sang to the Highland Marys of his time. And they kept a body warm.

Robert Bridewell was another who was strong on temperament, though his voice left much to be desired. In all

charity it might be classed as a parlor tenor, and let it go at that.

Also it must be admitted at the outset that the temperament, like Robert, was quite young. It needed an opportunity. It was hampered by steam-heated flats, many furs, a blithe winter, and indifferent females.

But opportunity knocks at the door of every temperament at least once. Some of the blitheness of the winter went sailing down the wind the night Robert went to The Trocadero and became aware of the knocking.

At first he didn't know The Trocadero had anything to do with it, as he met the human interest, which every good story must have, in one of those two-dollar-a-pound candy shops which cluster around the big amusement house like crystallizations of carbon in a retort.

In the vernacular, The Trocadero is listed as all to the tabasco. To persuade the world of this, it hires more press agents than any other institution of its kind in the world. Also it furnishes sensations to stir the imagination of the press agents.

It was here, that the pearls of the King of Portugus were exhibited in conjunction with Sappho Teiller, who risked mal de mer for five thousand

dollars a week. If she had been paid adequate salary and given her right place in the second row, third from the end, it would have been seasickness. But the press agents said *mal de mer*, so it became that. Of such things sensations are made. Even the pearls were *en toc*. The real ones were in a safe-deposit box.

Manager Gilfoile's plot was to have the income-tax payers drop around to see Sappho and the pearls and then have Ned Carberry make them laugh and forget it. Two restrictions were placed on the comedian; he might not refer to the *en tocness* of the pearls, nor to Sappho's plentiful lack of histrionic ability. It was enough that she was a king's favorite, and that he had lost his royal crown because of her. A great many patrons of The Trocadero thought he'd lost his royal head, which was due to the way the official praise agents handled the sensation. And the patrons proceeded to lose theirs.

The understudy for Anthony Hope who wrote about the king and the throne and the pearls and the mash notes of plain democratic Americans for a Brooklyn newspaper did his job so well that Robert Bridewell, after drawing his pay envelope Saturday night, decided to transfer his weekly nut sundae debauch to the Manhattan end of the bridge, and incidentally to visit the upper regions of The Trocadero. That's how he happened to be seated, after the show, at a little narrow table in the little narrow candy shop which hired only slim waitresses so they could get around and not rub their elbows on both walls at once.

He didn't need to punch the time clock at Grubner's until Monday morning. This gave him a whole day to remember the delights of The Trocadero, and to forget the head of the appraising department at Grubner's. He hated the head appraiser. The fellow didn't know his job.

Now that writer on the Brooklyn newspaper knew his job all right. There was no question of that. The Trocadero should hire him steady. After that thought rattled around in his brain a while Bridewell caught himself wishing he had a score of the combination opera, burlesque, and spectacle. His budget wouldn't permit it. The weekly charge against himself for amusement was beyond the limit now by the cost of the nut sundae he had ordered. That meant he'd have to curtail next week to the extent of twenty-eight cents, twenty-five for the sundae, three cents for the government. How long was this war-tax business going to last, anyway?

In spite of the inroads on his savings, he decided to buy the songs. He hummed a bar of the one he liked best. The lady of the pearls had lifted it over the high notes with her eyebrows, but Bridewell had been seated in the last row of the balcony and knew nothing of the eyebrow aid to the upper register. All he recalled about her was the dainty little toe which had kicked, with the aid of many song pluggers, the rhythmic chorus across the footlights into his memory. The rest of the entertainment was a magnificent blur of primary colors, glacial periods, shivery costumes which blended in a remote way with the nostalgia which crept on him when he ceased humming what he'd caught of Sappho's lyrical contribution.

He tried the chorus over from the beginning. It wouldn't do to let it slip. Then he wondered why Mrs. Cummings didn't have the piano tuned as she'd promised. Perhaps the boarding house would be worth living in then. He'd show them all what he could do with this song. It just suited his voice the way "Promise Me" did the night he sang it for Betty when he left home.

The narrow candy shop was an eddy in the strong current of subway seat grabbers. But Bridewell became oblivious of their laughing, giggling, elbow-

ing, hurrying. He saw only a New England village clinging to its hill, and Betty waving good-by to him as he turned the bend in the road at the bridge. It was his first experience with the loneliness of the crowd.

The poignant moment was held in suspense until the approach of the slim Hebe with two sundaes. Placing one before Bridewell, she set the other down in front of a girl that the homesick youth had not noticed taking a seat at his spindly legged, space-economizing table.

There was something about her that made him think he'd seen her somewhere before. When the bronze, age-old, disillusioned eyes looked unflinchingly at him, he knew he had made a mistake. She was a stranger, foreign of type, red as to hair—in some quarters it might be called cerise—with features that Praxiteles and Phidias and other sculptors the high-school teacher had talked about in the history class could have modeled if they hadn't suffered the inconvenience of an early death. Her skin was so transparent and her flesh so delicate that Bridewell persuaded himself he could see the sundae making progress down the slender throat.

Unfortunately, Bridewell was not awakened to the advantage of being a native of New York and displayed a provincial interest in the phenomenon. So deep was this interest, he anticipated by the fraction of a second the spasm which swept over the girl's face. Attributing this to the mid-winter blast which scurried through the narrow shop from the open door, he got up and closed it.

In front of the shop a crowd had gathered around the wreck of one of those French-gray confections on wheels that are upholstered with taffeta and have mirrors and bouquet holders and monograms all over their insides. But Bridewell didn't notice it. He was

afraid some one might take his seat and his sundae. As he passed the girl he eyed the cloak thrown carelessly on the chair and was almost impelled to gather it about her shoulders and pin it so it would stay. By way of compromise he suggested that she do it herself. She looked at him coldly. Not being the full-fledged native of the big city he later became, he blushed and stammered an apology.

"I thought it was the wind that made you shiver so. That's why I closed the door."

"You close the door because you see the—the crisis of the nerves? You do it for me?"

He nodded.

"Thank you so much, m'sieu. But this is what do it." She indicated the sundae. "It is not what I order."

For the first time Bridewell noticed his own mote of ice cream in a molasses-colored sea of sirup.

"That waitress made a mistake. This is yours." He pushed the untasted sundae over to her.

"But, m'sieu."

"It's all right." Bridewell hurried his reply out over her protest. "Eat it up. I'll get mine all right."

At that instant the slim Hebe approached and rectified her mistake by making another one. Seeing them in conversation, she naturally put both charges on one check and naturally gave the check to Bridewell. Which accounts for Bridewell and the girl with the tired eyes leaving the narrow candy store, together after the duenna of the cash register had demanded a separate check from the girl, and after she had returned to the spindly legged table and accosted Bridewell, and they had searched the floor and she had searched her hand bag and he had lifted the dishes and they had called the slim Hebe, and the slim Hebe had shown where she had coupled them in her charges for the sundaes.

Then the tenor temperament closed its ears to the screech of protest from the budget, and Bridewell paid for both desserts.

To this day he doesn't know what happened to him just then. What he actually saw was a prepossessing girl with slim, artist hands and an exotic face looking for a little slip of paper with twenty-eight cents marked on it. What the eye of the tenor temperament saw was a heroine in distress, an unjust accusation, a rescue, and a triumphant retreat to the sidewalk, where the wind blew the cloak and scanty dress of the heroine about in an all-too-familiar manner.

This time the impelling power was too great. Without a word, he gathered the cloak about neck and shoulders of the slight figure and turned his back on Brooklyn Bridge and the hall bedroom at the other end of it.

"You live up this way?" he queried.

"Yes, m'sieu. On Seventy-sixth Street." She glanced at the wreck of the French-gray sedan as she spoke. Her interest seemed more than academic.

"I'm going to see that you get home safely. It's after twelve o'clock."

"Yes, m'sieu."

It was apparent that she stopped at the curb for him to hail a taxi.

"The subway's two blocks farther along. We'll take the express to Seventy-second Street." At this the spasm that had excited his interest at the outset played a return date on the face of the girl. He was too busily engaged figuring out the size shoe she wore to notice it.

"I'd say they're twos, B width," he said, indicating the short-vamp suédes. It was a natural remark, but the smudge of a smile replacing the spasm on the face of the girl made him hasten to explain his connection with the boot-and-shoe business. It was his task to keep track for Grubner of those retail

firms which might be induced to take on a line of Monday specials.

"But the Monday special. What is he?"

"Don't you know?" In Bridewell's question there was something of the pity a well-ordered American mind has for the foreigner unacquainted with American routine.

Then followed the explanation of an institution that banished the blueness from Monday, and the relation of Grubner & Co. to it, and Bridewell's relation to Grubner & Co. Also a sketchy history of the Bridewell family, the Bridewell home in New England, the Bridewell boarding house in Brooklyn, with the marble-top table in the parlor and the photograph album and the crayons of Mrs. Cummings' uncle and aunt on the wall above the tinkly piano which he was going to have tuned so he might learn Sappho's song.

He hummed a bar or two of this to let her know what it was like, and was agreeably surprised at the quality of the tone he produced. On top of all this he gave his right name.

Now, it is axiomatic that, after midnight, any one talking to a stranger on the brilliant thoroughfare which bisects Manhattan is never by any chance the same person on any other section of the trite little isle at any other hour of the day or night. When there is a departure from this rule there is something wrong: innocence, unsophistication, what not.

Perhaps it was a combination of these two limitations that kept him from realizing they had passed the subway entrance at Fiftieth Street. If the girl noticed the kiosk, she said nothing. Nor did she say a word when they passed the Central Park entrance to the underground. Her little feet pattered beside Bridewell's and her face wore the look of a new interest.

Before the wind had lost its bluster and veered around until it gusted in-

frequently at their backs, Bridewell had adjusted the cloak twice. This was done with such an air of complete detachment, something suggesting a duty to be performed, that the girl stood still and sought out the stars over his shoulder. Some of the tired look which had gathered in her eyes, seemingly through overwork appraising men and their motives, slipped away to where the Little Dipper swung steadily through the night.

At Seventy-sixth Street and Central Park West she laughed.

"It was such a short walk for so long a distance, m'sieu, that I do not care if we miss the subway."

This came on the heels of Bridewell's apologies, repeated at frequent intervals from Sixtieth Street on. It sounded odd to him, but he put it down to the usual foreign way of fracturing the language.

Before saying good night he showed concern about the steam heat in her room, advised her against open-work stockings in winter, and inveighed against the custom of the low-neck dress and high skirt which invited pneumonia.

The girl looked at his back wonderingly as he turned away toward Brooklyn and the little hall bedroom and the tinkly piano that was going to be tuned some day for Sappho's song. He had not tried to kiss her or press her hand or make an appointment. He had not even asked her name. All that interested him at the final moment was the supply of coal in the apartment house and if the janitor kept the fire up.

Bridewell was a trifle shy, a little more reticent when he met the girl again. Outside, the storm was raging. He had waited in the little, narrow candy shop, sipping hot chocolate through the after-theater hour. Every time a customer sat in the seat apportioned by him to the girl, he recalled a book he'd glanced through dealing

with the influence of mind on mind, and concentrated on the word "hurry." It was at the stroke of midnight when a sedan, ultramarine this time, stopped in front of the narrow candy shop.

Bridewell didn't see the exotic face crowned by the cerise hair pressed against the glass door of the sedan. He didn't see the little figure stand at the curb until the storm had almost ruined a Poiret gown and a Louise cloak. But the girl in the doorway, dripping rain from her fashionable plumage, caught his eye at once, and he ordered a double portion of chocolate, extra hot.

"I thought you'd be out in it! Look at you! You're soaked to the skin."

He took charge of her as one having authority and shook the remnants of the storm out of her garments.

"It is nothing, m'sieu. Nothing."

The girl kept her eyes on him. They seemed older than the universe to-night.

"You'll get your death. That's something, isn't it?"

The slim Hebe brought the chocolate. For a full minute not a word was said. Bridewell seemed to grow embarrassed. Finally he reached down and picked up a package that he'd placed near his chair when he first came in.

"These are for you. You must put them on before you go out again."

He undid the string as he spoke and displayed a heavy raincoat, two pairs of woolen stockings, dark olive, also a pair of rubbers, size two, B width.

"Why you come in the storm, m'sieu? You do not come here when it is good weather?"

"I knew you'd be out without rubbers and things, the way you were the other night."

He blushed. She kept her eyes on his face. The blush deepened.

"You don't mind wearing Brooklyn bargains, do you? They were selling



out bankrupt stock and I—I thought of you."

The girl laughed a strange little far-away laugh. The narrow eyes became round and innocent and young. For an instant the illusion of happiness danced in the iris that hadn't harbored any illusion affecting the male of the species for many a day.

"If I wear the rubbers, we find the subway to-night. Yes?"

There was a touch of gayety in the question that Bridewell missed.

"It's too long a walk in the rain from the station to your apartment. Then there's the walk at this end, too. No; I'm going to take you home in a taxi."

The taxi was an invasion of Bridewell's budget system that may be explained only in terms of the tenor temperament. Congenitally and by environment and association he was opposed to paying one dollar and eighty cents for the trip to Seventy-sixth Street. All the way to his clammy boarding house he measured that brief journey and the exorbitant price against the six-mile ride for a nickel to the Atlantic Avenue, Brooklyn, station, which seemed a refuse for sane travelers.

To the accompaniment of the storm's sledge-hammer blows on the roof, he entered against himself in the ledger, under the general head of amusements:

|                         |        |
|-------------------------|--------|
| Item—To taxi .....      | \$1.80 |
| Item—To tip .....       | .10    |
| Item—To chocolate ..... | .95    |
| Item—To tip .....       | .10    |
| Item—To car fare .....  | .10    |

In the same column were sundry entries for a raincoat, rubbers, and two pairs of heavy stockings. The total was more than the budget system would permit. Much more. It represented a tenth of his savings.

He sighed. A tenth to date. At that instant the storm crashed with greater fury than ever against the roof, and a feeling of satisfaction came over him

as he thought of the girl snug in her room on Seventy-sixth Street and Central Park West.

To the credit of Bridewell it must be said that never once during the remainder of the winter did he buy for the girl anything that was not substantial. And he was unashamed in his search for bargains. Even the Grubner & Co. influence was drawn on to get certain things at wholesale prices. During these negotiations a new relationship grew up between himself and the Grubner sacred cow. It was a sudden reversal of form. Hitherto the sacred cow had not been cognizant of Bridewell's existence. Clerks in the Grubner establishment were like the head farmer and his wife on a country place owned by a city man, lumped generally with the unavoidable evils that ate in the kitchen. Now he was delegated to go with the head appraiser and look over bankrupt stocks of shoes, job lots in broken-down factories, old-fashioned lines which might be shipped to the bohunks of the Pennsylvania and West Virginia mines and sold at a fancy price. Also he was allowed to sit in as a listener on the conferences that decided Grubner policy: greater investments than usual, extension of bank credit, enlarging the business, and other matters of importance.

Soon a vacancy occurred and he became one of the estimators. This brought with it dignity and responsibility and a salary almost equal to both.

The advancement made him a little dizzy at first. It was quite unexpected, though this was his second year with the firm.

Betty was kept duly informed of his changes of fortune. Never, of course, by anticipation. For he never romanced with Betty. He told her the exact date of each step after it had occurred.

This built his house upon a solid foundation of truth and an adequate salary. It was hardly a house, being

only a Prospect Avenue flat in a three-story, cold-water walk-up. But it was going to be better than a mere house, however pretentious. It was going to be a home. June was the accepted month for the inauguration of such establishments.

Sunday morning he sat down and wrote Betty all about it. He said the flat was waiting, unfurnished, so she'd have a chance to get the things in it she liked. Also he said he was waiting to be made over from a bachelor into a benedict. And that the girl with the cerise hair was waiting—

Here he stopped. He crossed out the last line. He wanted the girl and Betty to be friends. In fact, Betty would need friends, as she was coming to a strange place where the people didn't mix with one another only when they met by accident New Year's Eve up around Forty-second Street and Broadway.

He wondered if Betty would understand.

The valley of the Hudson was preening itself for the quickly advancing spring. Daffodils were tossed under the windows of suburbanites like nothing in the world except nuggets of gold. Those not fortunate enough to be suburbanites saw in the florists' windows the same nuggets called by the more expensive title of jonquils, but harboring as much promise.

For the maker of the budget, who listed his sartorial extravagances under the general head of amusements, the advancing spring and the wedding ceremony and Betty became a serious complex.

The purchase of clothes for another woman may be listed in one's budget as an amusement, but one's affianced wife may be permitted to find it far other than amusing. It dawned on him that Betty was narrow, provincial, puritanic.

That was all right. Those were the

qualities in her he loved most. The call had been for one of his kind. He was also narrow, provincial, puritanic. And his New England conscience would not allow him to keep the matter of the clothes to himself. He wasn't going to start married life under false pretenses.

Then the tinkly piano sent the notes of Sappho's song up the clammy boarding-house walls. A cracked voice was helped out by one-finger calisthenics on the keys.

Bridewell hated the familiarity of the other boarders with this particular song. He didn't know why. He just did. After a while he began to hum it. Then he sang it full-throated and with abandon. Somehow he felt that the top note carried across the drab roofs of Brooklyn to Seventy-sixth Street and Central Park West.

Each word took on a value that was hidden away somewhere out of sight before the sap began running in the trees. He went at it again:

Wayward my feet,  
My heart belongs to you.  
Where strong tides meet  
An eddy lies there, too,  
And quiet dreams  
Are ever hovering near,  
And then it seems  
That you are near.

Wild heart! Wild heart!

One with the storm at its height.

Wild heart! Wild heart!

One with all dreams of delight.

Blow winds of life to my loved one this song:

Wild heart still waits where the night tides run strong.

On beaten shores  
I ponder in the rain.  
Each wave implores  
I call you back again.  
And then, my love,  
Your face I hope to see,  
Kiss once and prove  
My constancy.

Some of the pathos lay in the song; most of it in the singing. Bridewell had the delusion of the high, clear note

the tenor imagines himself giving to a waiting world, composed mostly of girls.

He went immediately in search of one of them. The call was louder than the warning cry of the budget and overbore the mute protest of Betty's unfinished letter.

It was their first Sunday on the Palisades. The girl was dainty, exquisite, happy. It showed in her light step that hardly bent the grass she walked on. It echoed in her rippling laughter at everything and nothing. It danced in her eyes that were as young as the spring and the jonquils.

At times youth is glad with the gladness of all life. At other times it sags under the burden of mere existence. And life may be out where the common grass and weeds ramble off in a democratic way to the water's edge, as if making a doormat for venturesome feet. And mere existence may be close to a throne where the royal carpet is so thick and red and absorbing it refuses even to echo back the emptiness of the whole show.

Royalty sat beside the girl on the grass. It was a new royalty, yet as old as time and love. But the crown was no more secure than that on the head of the King of Portugus who lost everything for a few pearls and a girl.

As they came near the forbidden kingdom, they spoke lightly of many things, including Sappho Teiler, the rope of pearls, the ex-king, the budget, and item seventy-five cents to one balcony seat at The Trocadero.

"But you not see the play, Robert. Up at the tip top of the place one not see much. One hear less."

This man who bought lavishly of rubbers and throat protectors for her and mounted ungrudgingly to the top of The Trocadero to save a few pennies and did not kiss her lips or press her hand or invade, had a nice name. She said it again casually:

"Robert, you see the play from the front some time, yes? Good seats, Robert. Very good seats, this next time."

"Would you go along?"

She smiled demurely as she nodded out a *oui*.

"Betty will be here by then. And her mother. You see, I think it's better to get the women satisfied with the furnishings of the flat right off the reel. Then there's no comeback. It can all be fixed up in a week. It'll make it more comfortable when we get home from our honeymoon. Everything will be set for us to start housekeeping."

It was the first time he had mentioned Betty. As he went on in a matter-of-fact way about the little Brooklyn flat, the flavor seemed to desert the spring and youth in the eyes of the girl. She looked down the Hudson to where the spires of the City of Churches and nice mid-Victorian restraint were lifted against an opalescent sky. After a while she said simply:

"You will be kind to Betty, always. A woman need much kindness."

Then they crossed the ferry to Manhattan.

The music cue for Sappho's song came from the orchestra. Bridewell wasn't anxious over anything in particular, though the failure of the girl to keep her promise to go with him left a little regret. Still, with the arrival of the warm weather and Betty he didn't seem to care so much about things that used to keep him on tiptoe.

Betty and Betty's comfortable-looking mother were on the surface quite indifferent, with that indifference the small New England town breeds, as it breeds the higher moralities.

Neither the young bride nor her mother had displayed much interest in Robert's invitation to Mademoiselle Incognito. They pronounced her name English fashion, and were quite willing

she should live up to it. Also they accepted, without question, the headache that kept her from being of their little party. To each other they confided that it was only an excuse, and one that Robert seemed to feel more than he should. For his sake they would go down to the wharf and bid her God-speed the next day, for the little girl of the cerise locks was returning to her "belle France."

The doubtful relations existing between God and foreigners generally, robbed the expected meeting of any possible glamour. But they would face that to-morrow. To-night they were scheduled for the much-advertised Sappho, her pearls, the glacial slide, and Ned Carberry, whose comic songs they'd heard on the phonograph at a "Get Together" of the Ladies' Aid.

Harking back to primeval times, the concoctors of the extravaganza opened the performance with the famous glacial slide. It was a thing of beauty. The ice cap formed by the cunning hands of the scene painter and the property man caught the pale tints of the rising sun and reflected them back in Nile green, delicate rose, amethyst, sapphire blue, and every other color, primary and secondary, that could be squeezed out of the chromatic scale and a projectascope with a patent pending on account of litigation.

As Sappho entered R. U. from between two blocks of ice, the whirring of the projectascope stopped. In the hush of expectancy that followed, the gasp of the two women from New England could be heard distinctly. Also Robert's smothered cry.

There was a suggestion of pain in it. Sappho was the girl of the tired eyes and the cerise hair whom he had kept warmly clothed by disrupting his budget, and who held in common with him the only secret in his life that he had decided should be told Betty after a while.

Sappho was cold. He could tell that from the way her lips trembled as she looked directly at Betty. So did his, though he was unaware of the sympathetic tremor.

The blocks of ice were enough to chill the marrow in her young bones. He closed his eyes. She would freeze to death. For he was horrified to see she was clad in the famous rope of pearls *en toc*, and larger—because they were handmade—than nature or oysters intended, and a girdle of ermine, and nothing else.

The rest of the evening, seen through a haze by Bridewell, was finally explained to Betty's satisfaction, but never to his own. Even when he has the flat all to himself and sits quietly smoking, he can't quite grasp the full significance of it.

He remembers taking Betty's fur cloak and jumping to the Sumarun runway, across which the principals and chorus frequently tripped above the heads of the audience, paging the plot of the play. Why he was not stopped he doesn't know. It hardly interests him now. What he can't figure out is the little cluck, as if from a tired song sparrow, that Sappho uttered as he wrapped Betty's cloak around her bare shoulders. Of like nature is the groping for the cause of the new meaning that lay behind the banal lines of Sappho's song when she kissed him full on the lips. In the midst of loud applause from an audience that put many interpretations on the improvised scene, all correct, the kiss came to him as a harvesting of the primordial impulse. It was of the time when the man-shape was shedding his hairy coating, and encountering those first concepts of time and space and beauty that caused him to make strange noises in the throat.

Even over this moment of perception, realization, recognition, Bridewell

shakes his head dubiously. It's the one thing he didn't mention to Betty. She wouldn't understand. He saw that when she harped so much on the kiss. A public kiss!

Betty's mother was hardly as comfortable as usual when that public kiss was under discussion. Robert simply held to his original explanation that he didn't know what possessed him.

The women didn't go down to the boat to say Godspeed to the godless creature who was the cause of it all. The girl was radiant. She waved to him from the deck. She had a smile for him as she went out of sight that

he likes to recall. Grubner was at the wharf, too. Bridewell often wonders how the sacred cow got to know Sappho. But he had never discussed it with him. He was getting on too well with the firm to open up any controversy. The less said about such matters the better.

Sappho's last words were as much of a puzzle as the rest of the experience.

"God bless you, Robert," she said. "Not once will I forget the Palisades. Nor your budget. It is one pity you have not the tenor voice. You have the tenor temperament."



## THE ISLES OF WHY

**I**MPRISONED in a secret sea,  
 Beneath a copper sky,  
 There lies a land of mystery,  
 The Islands of the Why;  
 A land of awesome mystery,  
 The fearful Isles of Why.

For you and I have sought to know  
 A hundred things or more,  
 And none have answered us and so  
 We seek that distant shore.  
 No answer to our troubles came,  
 And so we seek that shore.

For we are young and find it hard  
 To fully understand  
 Why pain should go with youth and love.  
 Was it divinely planned?  
 Should pain and sorrow, youth and love,  
 Go tripping hand in hand?

And should we search the secret sea  
 Beneath the copper sky,  
 Where all the host of answers wait  
 To welcome by and by,  
 Would we be any happier  
 For having known the why?

ANNE ABBETT.

# Venturer's Luck

By Katharine Hill

Author of "The Pearl and the Tècla,"  
"The Little Clay Pot," etc.



## CHAPTER I.

**G**OOD-LOOKING kid, anyhow!" Greg Sherril glanced about the shabbily appointed bedroom to which Val had conducted him, philosophically placing the emphasis of his attention upon the girl herself. It was a disadvantage not to be on the campus, to begin with, and this boarding house, to which he had come on a casual direction, was possibly not the best that the town afforded. But he decided quickly that it would do.

Val was fifteen, a tall child, thin and lithe and flat as a boy. Her eyebrows were straight and thick over well-opened brown eyes. There was a splash of red on either cheek more daring than any that comes out of rouge pots; it was the vermilion of maple leaves in September, and her softly characterful mouth had the same hot color. Her hair was dark red, a shade between copper and bronze. She should never have been allowed to go to the door without tidying it, for it was half down her back, and a little twig or two caught in the tangles showed that she had been climbing a tree since she had brushed it.

She wasn't disconcerted, though; she appeared quite untroubled by any consciousness of her own appearance. She conducted the interview, made all the arrangements, uttered the banal amenities of the landlady as she led him up-

stairs and exhibited the room, with a social poise which amused Greg, who liked children without realizing it.

"We have an empty room; it's a very nice room."

"Hadn't I better see your mother?"

"Mother's out, but I know as much about it as she does. It's twelve dollars a week. Come on, I'll show it to you. It's a very desirable room," she pronounced in her funny, grown-up manner. "Being at the back of the house makes it quiet, and you get a nice view of the Alpha Delta Mu grounds; that's the frat house that you see right over there."

"I suppose it's a nice, orderly fraternity then?" Greg asked gravely; it was known for the opposite qualities. "You can assure me that my studies won't be disturbed by any loud singing or rowdy shouting from that direction?"

She looked a little embarrassed.

"Well, they do make a noise sometimes," she admitted. "Sometimes I can't sleep. But probably, at those times, you'll be out somewhere making a noise yourself. You're a college boy, too, aren't you?"

"In a sense, yes; but you mustn't confuse me with the disorderly element," he teased her. "I am here for study. However, if you can stand the racket, I guess I can. I'll take the room then, subject to Mrs. Morgan's approval. You think it'll be all right for to-night,



anyhow? D'you think I might unpack my suit case and have a wash?"

"The bathroom's the first door on the other side of the landing. The bed's all made up. Our rooms," she explained with obvious pride, "are never empty very long. Dinner's from six to seven. I'll speak to mother. Breakfast's from half past seven to half past eight. You see, chapel's at nine."

"I shall cut chapel," Sherril said.

"You can't—only a certain number of times!"

"Oh, I shall cut a lot of things," he assured her easily.

When she had gone he lay down on the bed, which proved to be lumpy and creaking and, with his hands crossed behind his head, examined his surroundings in detail. The plaster ceiling was discolored above the single gas jet and had a network of cracks in one corner; the enamel had flaked off of the bed-posts, showing black iron beneath; and the window blinds were old and creased, though the white curtains before them were stiffly and newly laundered. The carpet was threadbare where it had suffered the most usage, and only under the bureau could be seen its original design of roses, big as cabbages, on a green ground. Probably it ran even more brightly under the bed, unless the bed had been shifted to cover ravages; he hadn't the curiosity to lean over and see.

Greg's eyes narrowed suddenly as in their wanderings they reached the highboy in the farthest corner. It was battered like everything else, but it had the appealing tones of old mahogany; the color was almost the color of the darker shades in that girl's ripping hair; and the simple dignity of its lines declared unobtrusively but unmistakably, that it was a piece of furniture made a century ago, or the adroitest of imitations.

But the woman who had bought the crockery on the washstand and the pillow shams with "Good night" scrawled

over them in red stitchery had never selected an article of the highboy's pattern. It had come to her by inheritance or by marriage.

Greg had the healthiest curiosity about the people with whom he came in contact, and he speculated now, with amused enjoyment, about the red-haired child and the terrible sitting room in which she had interviewed him, and the odd life it must be for a girl to be constantly thrust into a specious intimacy with a dozen youths whose personnel was always changing. He wondered what sort of a person her mother might be, and what effect the center of culture so near might be supposed to have on such a girl's intellectual development.

He did not know a great deal about academic life and he knew still less, of course, about the gossiping ferment of a college town. He had come here at an age when he was privileged to vote, driven by the desire to know, to learn, to sit down to a full feast of the study which he had found so fascinating when in a full life he had come into possession of a thought-provoking book and a leisure hour together.

At twenty-one, Gregory Sherril had been his own master for half a dozen years. Fifteen is perhaps the age at which a boy most needs and least misses the advantages of a home, and Greg, turning from the thought of the final bereavement which had left him solitary, had very soon a sneaking thrill at his own freedom, when comparing his situation with that of his fellows at school. "My old man beat me up for it," a friend of his, a year older than himself, let drop as anticlimax to a tale of young daring and insubordination. Nobody, Greg reflected, could do anything like that to him. If his masters at school became too dictatorial, he even had the legal right to insist that his guardian send him elsewhere.

Successfully, he had opposed the idea of college when he had finished prepar-

atory school. He wanted to travel, he announced, and since there were some three thousand dollars a year at his disposal, the business man who had undertaken to look after his interests agreed. He himself was conscious that he had got more harm than good out of his college life, and over the desk to which he was chained he dreamed sometimes of the open spaces.

"Let the kid go; make a man of him," was his decision.

Greg was made a man of with a vengeance. He shipped for Genoa by way of the Azores, let the boat go on without him deliberately in order to put in a month or so in those fascinating islands, pushed on presently to Italy, overran it with mounting enthusiasm, and left it at last for the remoter parts of Greece, where he was to hear from a wandering missionary, months later, that a healthy war was raging in Europe.

Greg, who ate and dreamed adventure, was not to be left out of an adventure like war. He was nineteen years old, as strong as a young horse, with the catlike adroitness of movement which results from fine proportioning and much indulgence in sports. The Servian army took him, and he fought until certain hurts made him temporarily useless.

He had, of course, a strong sense of partisanship, but little comprehension of the issues of the war, and in action only a strong feeling of comradeship with the men he fought beside. He was contented enough to drop out with the wounds which had got him his discharge, and to make no effort, when at last he was pronounced fit again, to go back. In the year before the Russian defection, when the end seemed near and in no sense dubious, he decided that a little more education would be, after all, no bad thing. In the hospital he had run across some Englishmen who knew all sorts of things that he didn't know, and

he decided it made a fellow feel cheap. He could speak Italian fluently, and in Portuguese, the Servian dialects, and modern Greek he could make himself understood well enough. He had an immense amount of general knowledge, picturesque and accurate as often as not. But he knew less than nothing of the sciences, and he had only a schoolboy's recollection of ancient history, and a schoolboy's blank ignorance of European developments of the past century.

After three years' holiday from study, the thought of learning, of peaceful concentration on the things of the mind, beckoned Greg irresistibly. It was going to be darned interesting, this life among a set of people as different from Servian soldiers, probably, as any lot you could find on earth. Variety, contrast! In these, Greg felt, lay half the interest of life.

When it was time for dinner he went downstairs, finding the puzzle of the highboy renewed and intensified by the procession down stair walls of framed photographs of Greek marbles, unnoticed when he had passed them before under Miss Morgan's conduct. Yet the sitting-room mantelpiece had a fringed drape, and colored plaster plaques were the chosen wall decoration.

Mrs. Morgan resembled her crockery, her plaques, and her pillow shams. Her hair was yellow, her chin double, her attitude matronly. Her light-blue eyes bulged behind spectacles, and she wore a plaid shirtwaist with a black satin skirt.

Val had the foot of the table, the apple sauce to help and the butter, the bread to cut. She was so busy that she had little time to eat, but she talked steadily through the meal to such students as were silent, feeling evidently a hostess' responsibility that conversation should not flag.

Greg, halfway between mother and daughter, put a low-toned question to a modish youth beside him.

"How does it happen they're so different?" He jerked his head all but imperceptibly in either direction.

"Why shouldn't they be? No relation."

"Oh! Stepmother?"

"M-hmh. The towheads over at the little table are hers. Val's mother must have been more"—he paused for a word, then after a measuring survey of Greg sank his voice to an impressive whisper—"nous autres!"

Sherril suppressed a grin.

"Oh, I see. And the old man? He's out of the picture, I gather."

"Died about five years ago. He was a prof. Greek history. Fact!"

"Well, but——"

"It is rough on Val. Hooked up with a ménage like this. You see, she really is——"

"*Nous autres*, too?"

"Exactly! Well, whatever I'm telling you's only hearsay, you know. I gather that her father wasn't in very good standing from the time he made his—*mésalliance*. Then he must have slipped up on his life-insurance premiums or something. Anyhow, when he died he didn't leave a sou, but he left five children, counting Val. I guess Mrs. Morgan makes out all right, having the house and not doing herself any injustice with the meals, but I know several of the faculty ladies are worried about Val. But, as Mrs. Hitchcock was saying to me the other day, what can one do for her while she's in the care of that impossible woman?"

"Strikes me she owes something to the impossible woman at that," Greg remarked. "Nobody else clamoring to feed and clothe her, is there?"

"Not a relative in sight, outside of the stepmother. Of course, it doesn't matter so much while she's a flapper. Maybe something will turn up later on; she may strike out for herself. I don't mind telling you I'm keeping an eye on little Val. She's going to be a smashing

good looker some day. Cast your eye on her. Get what I mean?"

"She's a pretty kid, but she's only a kid."

"Well, she won't stay a kid, and she won't stay forever in a fresh-water college town. I'm willing to put my money on that."

"What studies are you going in for, Sherman? Is that the name?"

"Sherril," said Greg, abetting readily the change of subject. "I'm interested in archæology and anthropology and biology. I'm not going in for a diploma. Special."

"Oh, I see. You'll have Andrews in some of those subjects. And old Hodges——"

## CHAPTER II.

Greg attacked his new work with enthusiasm, winning the swift prizes which a mature mind, at grips with a subject it has willed to make its own, can startlingly achieve. He besieged his amazed and delighted professors for long bibliographies, and read voraciously at night. In the intervals of study he took long tramps into the country, and on one such walk, when he must have been six or seven miles at least from town, he was surprised to overtake Val Morgan, striding along unaccompanied.

"Hello! What are you doing way out here?"

"I'm mixing a cake for dinner," she was too young to forgo the easy gibe. "Can't you see? I'm taking a stroll, like yourself."

"Fifteen miles, *some* stroll," he commented.

"I like walking."

"So do I, but riding's better, and sailing, and flying."

"Oh! I've *never* been on a horse in my life. I've never been in any boat except a little old rowboat. I've never been up in an *aéroplane*!"

She spoke hotly, her indignation

mounting as she named each count against Fate, and Sherril laughed.

"Hardly anybody has flown yet, comparatively speaking. You can't make a grievance out of that!"

"But aren't you crazy to?"

"It makes me sick as the deuce."

"You've been up!"

"I got taken along as an observer a time or two, when the regular man wasn't available. In the war, you know."

"You've flown—you were in the war!" She had so many questions now that they had walked another mile before he had answered or parried them all.

"Say! This is too far for a kid like you," he broke off, with a sudden realization that he had never pushed quite so far on this road before. "We ought to be turning back. Aren't you tired? Don't you want to rest?"

"Oh, I'm not a bit tired. But we can sit down a while, if you'd like. I know a nice place."

The road ran here between rocky pastures. With one hand laid lightly on the rail which fenced them, and a neat whirl of straight legs, she was over. The field dipped abruptly a few yards away; below was short, soft grass, a brown stream spreading shallow over stones, a view across gradually falling to the town they had left, and the suave hills beyond it.

Sitting on the grass, the air was still around them, while the big autumn winds they had faced in walking roared in the trees, thrashed along the bare meadows above them.

"Now I see where you get your red cheeks," Greg said, smiling at the girl almost affectionately.

With the exception of an affair or two which he preferred not to think about, his relations, since his mother's death, had been almost exclusively with boys and men. He did not think now, consciously, of Val's girlhood as a factor

in her growing interest for him. He thought of her as a child, but it occurred to him that it would be rather jolly to make a little pal of her, that her eagerness to hear, her flattering absorption in what he told her of his adventures, was a pleasant thing outside his experience. He wished she would let him into her own little world in return, show him her mind, her aims. Dropping the subject of himself determinedly, he tried to draw her out.

"That's enough about me. Now tell me how you like having your house overrun by strange fellows all the time. Aren't you glad when summer comes and we all get out?"

"Then there's summer school," she reminded him. "I like the boys better!" When she was a little older she would call them men. Now she had still her stepmother's locutions.

"But you get away when you can, and take long walks and—climb trees?"

"There isn't anything else." Her eyes, on the distant town, were somber, and Greg wondered if she felt her position, had any sense of lost caste.

"If you're free in the great outdoors, you've got one of the big, best things," he told her didactically; "but I should think an intelligent girl like you, in a college town, could get a lot out of the college, too. The museums and libraries and things are all open to you, aren't they? Your father was a professor, wasn't he?"

"He taught Greek history. But I don't ever go up there."

"Well, you should. Some of the open lectures would be interesting to you, too, I should think. Look here"—he probed—"there are a lot of pictures in your sitting room, and then there are the photographs going by the stairs. Which do you like best?"

"Why, what a funny question!" She widened her eyes. "The sitting-room ones, of course!"

Oddly enough, he felt his interest in-

creased by her answer; she had so much to learn.

"Who'd like those old gray-and-white, ghostly things!" she added scornfully. "Some of the pictures in the sitting room are *lovely*!"

Greg passed the pictures.

"But the photographs? Don't you suppose your father thought they were beautiful?"

"Well, he taught Greek history!"

"You're his daughter; I wonder how much you know about Greek history." He folded his arms magisterially and began to examine her.

She knew nothing. Geographically she could place Greece, hazily she knew that its greatness was of the past, that it was "all different now," and that big white statues, without any clothes on, were in some way connected with it.

At the end he said severely:

"It seems rather a pity, doesn't it, that a man should devote his life to a subject, get to be an authority on it, and his own daughter, at—how old are you?—be practically ignorant of it?"

"I don't have much time to study," offered Val, chewing a bit of grass. "You can't think how much there is to do about the house."

"But you have plenty of time for walks like this!"

He enjoyed scolding her, seeing her eyes drop, and her lips twist under her teeth.

"It's not as though it weren't *interesting*, you know. It's—thrilling's no word for it! Listen here—" He lay back, looking at the gray sky above, and the grass at the top of the bluff, waving wildly under the lash of the wind from which they were sheltered.

"Look how pretty it is here, nothing could be prettier, and the minute you get a house or a railway station into the picture, it's spoiled. They made nothing, those men, except something beautiful. *Their* buildings weren't blots on the landscape, not much! If we were

walking in a Greek meadow, we might come on an old temple, perhaps, and it would be perfect; the whole scene would play up to it, and there'd be white pillars against a blue sky, and violet hills between them, or the sea. Inside there'd be a god or a goddess, and they weren't just big dolls to play with; they meant the most tremendous things. They had it all worked out, those fellows. We didn't teach 'em so much, Christianity didn't—"

"Why, weren't they heathens?"

He had been reading "The Golden Bough," and had been fascinated by it, but he understood that she must know her dolls before she could learn their meaning, and he began to tell her mythological stories, as the best introduction to her father's subject. She listened with the eagerness of a child hearing a fairy tale that is new, and that evening he carried a lamp along the staircase with her, and made her look more intelligently at Apollo and Demeter and Pallas Athene.

She kindled readily, accepting his standards with a child's facility.

"I never got a good look at them before," she excused herself. "It's always dark here. Yes, I see. He is beautiful." She looked from the head of Hermes to Greg's own profile, softly clear in the lamplight against the dim wall. "He looks something like you," she pronounced simply.

"Great Scott, girl!" He flashed a look of fury at her, his face suddenly suffused. "Don't you dare say anything like that again! I've licked more fellows for saying that!"

"But if you think it was nice for them to be beautiful—"

"That was different. It was ages ago, and all different. Besides, it isn't so." He swept the lamp on to the next picture, a little ashamed of his outburst; he was both younger and older than his age. "Oh, here's the sandal girl. If you could tie your shoe string like that,

I hope you'd have too good taste ever to ask a man to do it for you!"

Val became mad about Greek art and history. For a long series of afternoons she neglected her walks and wandered instead about the cast-room of the art gallery, learning the great statues from every angle. Now that her eyes were opened, perhaps heredity had something to do with her impassioned recognition of their beauty, or it may have been the mere receptiveness of her age. But she looked and learned until there grew up in her a great grief that these things were no more.

"What's the use of living now?" she asked Greg. "It was a million times better than Darthurst, but it isn't there any longer!"

"Well, of course. But there's all the rest of the world, isn't there? Greece was only one place, and one epoch. Oh, I give it to you that it was best! I'm getting restless in Darthurst myself. Next time, either I shall have a try at the East—Asia Minor, Tibet, India, or else I'll go the other way, and have a whack at the South Sea Islands. I believe I only stay here because I can't make up my mind which direction to go in. An ass between two bales of hay."

"But, I thought you were going through college!"

"So did I, but I don't believe I can stick it out. It was great at first, but now they don't seem to tell you much that isn't in the books, and I've already read the books; couldn't wait. Of course science is different, anybody could spend a lifetime over that. But not me. I want to pick up the trail again, and one of these days I'll be doing it."

"And all you have to do is just make up your mind, and go! Some people have all the luck."

"I'd like to take you along," he said idly. "Like to come?"

"Oh, no, I wouldn't like to come!" She spoke with the huge, ponderous sar-

casm of her years. "Oh, no, not at all!"

"You said you'd never been in a boat, never smelled salt water?"

"Heard the crash on her bows, dear lass, and the drum of her racing screw, As she ships it green on the long trail—"

"Well, you'd like a big old boat with a tall mast cutting its arc always just across the middle of the sky, and the sea all around you. Days and days. Probably you'd be seasick."

"I wouldn't!" she interrupted.

"They have real storms in the Pacific, I'm told. I've never seen the Pacific. You know, I never thought of that till now; it ought to tip the scales for the islands. Yes, it'll have to be the South Seas first, just on that account. Islands with palm trees on them. Atolls. Lagoons. Cannibals. Do you still want to go?"

"Greg"—he had asked her to call him that, liking the feeling it gave him that he had a little sister in her—"Greg, I'd like to go anywhere. We went to Springfield to have my tooth fixed once, and he hurt me dreadfully, but just going was worth it; I'd have it over again any day. And I think I should love the cannibals."

"You're a funny kid. Well, we'll see about it."

And he went on to talk of the charms of travel, exciting her more and more, quoting with immense spirit long passages of Kipling and Masefield.

"This little town's dead, you know!"

"Yes, isn't it?"

"These professors, they've got the most interesting living things in the world under their hands, and they somehow manage—they must lie awake nights thinking how to do it—to take all the color out of them; if there's any left, it's by accident. All they really care about is figures and tables and dates. I think I've pretty well got all they can give me, by now. I'll be hitting the trail very soon."



Val couldn't sleep that night. The toss of a big ship under her, the breaking of great seas, the sighting of magical islands low on sea horizons, fevered her brain with sensations so keenly imagined that they were all but realized. In a few days Greg was going, and he would take her along. She, to whom the trolley ride to Springfield had been a treasured experience, was to play all over the globe, at will.

She believed implicitly in his lightly uttered, "We'll see about it;" she was still child enough to regard the phrase as tantamount to a promise. She even felt a little remorseful at her own lack of regret about leaving her family, and a little panicky—there in the darkness without Sherrill's big, confident presence near her—at the thought of the cannibals. But just as the pain of her tooth had been compensated by the mere trip to Springfield, she thought that the adventure of the South Sea voyage would hardly be too dearly bought by even such an ending. And Greg had assured her that cannibalism was practically stamped out throughout the islands.

He had to make arrangements concerned with his defection from the courses he had undertaken, and for the next day or two Val saw him little except at meals. Passing out of the dining room before him she found time to whisper, "When?" in a conspirator's accent.

"Wednesday," he said less guardedly. "Eight-thirty train for Boston. Farewell to Darthurst!"

"Eight-thirty in the evening?"

"Yes. You might come to see me off."

She smiled brilliantly. He meant that she should tell her stepmother that, and though she knew that she would be forbidden to go at that hour, she had overridden Mrs. Morgan's prohibitions before now. But it would be easier to say nothing, to leave a note in her room,

and slip out the side door with her bundle, to cut across the fields to the station.

On Wednesday she packed, considering her possessions solemnly in the light of her new needs. The sailor suit for the voyage, last year's white Sunday-school dress for the tropic islands.

### CHAPTER III.

He wondered that she scarcely showed herself all day; indeed, she seemed to seek the society of her stepbrothers with unusual eagerness, and he was rather hurt that she disappeared right after dinner. He hung about a while waiting for her, hesitating to penetrate the kitchen, where he inferred that she was helping with the dishes. Surely she could spare the time to come out and say good-by!

It grew too late to wait any longer, and Greg left his own farewell messages with a student boarder. He'd write to her, he thought; maybe send her back a present from time to time, if he came across anything she might like.

Suit case in hand, he climbed into the bus that caught the train. The enthusiasm of his departure was a little damped, and he felt a corresponding rush of pleasure when, springing out at the station platform, he caught sight of Val's face in the little crowd already out by the tracks. But the train was in, and it stopped here a bare sixty seconds. Striding to it, he jumped up with his suit case, meaning to get down for a proper good-by when he had unburdened himself, and, if necessary, take the car on a run.

But she was on the step behind him, the last person aboard except the conductor who, stool in hand, sprang up after her. The train gathered way while Sherrill stood aghost.

"You shouldn't have done that, Val!" he expostulated when he had caught his

breath. "I was going to get off. Now you'll have to go on till the next stop!"

"The next stop!" She echoed him in open-mouthed bewilderment. "But——"

He cut her short by an appeal to the conductor who was now impelling them into the car.

"What's the next stop, Jack?"

"Southampton," the man said, and pushed past them down the aisle.

"We'd better go and sit down," Greg said. "After all, Val, this is nothing to get excited about. We can telephone your mother from Southampton just how it was, and get hold of a car there to take you back, if there isn't a train right away."

She was taking it ridiculously, making a catastrophe out of the small misadventure. Not a muscle of her tragic, stricken face relaxed as he smoothed away the difficulties, and a feeling of irritation rose in him.

"You needn't look at me like that!" he said impatiently. "It's your own fault. Nobody asked you to get on the train!"

She caught her breath sharply at that. She wasn't looking at him now, but at the dark, polished wood of the car wall, her eyes wide as though she saw horrors there. It occurred to Greg that she might have unpleasantness to anticipate from her stepmother's displeasure, and he felt immediately ashamed of himself. The woman would be quite capable, he imagined, of beating the girl.

"I say, Val," he began awkwardly, and laid his hand on her arm.

She flung off his touch and, for a flash, he met eyes somberly incandescent, rutilant, as though the flames in her hair burned behind them.

"I hate you!" the girl said intensely. "Don't speak to me!"

"I'll make it all right with Mrs. Morgan over the telephone—I'll let the train go on if there isn't time without. I'll tell her it was entirely my fault."

He was making no impression, nothing that he said interested her.

He became aware suddenly of an unwieldy paper parcel on her knees, a thing which had escaped his observation until now. Misgiving shot through him; could she have thought—— The mere possibility of such a misunderstanding made him poignantly sorry for her. At the same time he told himself she couldn't have thought he meant to take her. She wasn't a baby; she must have known how impossible such a thing would be.

But then what did she have in that big clumsily wrapped package?

Perhaps a farewell present for him, some pathetic offering of a child without skill to make or money to buy, only the will to give. If so, he'd value it for the affection that prompted it, make use of it constantly, never part with it. Poor little Val! It might be a rather large sofa cushion. He hoped passionately that it was.

He poked it with his finger.

"What have you got in here, Val?"

She looked up at him accusingly.

"What do you *suppose* I have in there?"

"Well, I'm asking you."

"My clothes, of course."

"Oh, Jiminy! Val, I never dreamed you'd take it that seriously. It—it's not a possible thing to do! I thought of course you knew that as well as I did. I wish I could take you, we'd have great times, but—why, how could you help knowing I was only joking?"

"Yes, it was awfully funny, wasn't it?"

He tried again.

"Do be reasonable! There are about fifty different reasons why I can't take you. You're only a little girl; you couldn't go the places I'm going or do the things I'm going to do. You couldn't do them even if you were grown up. They're—a man's sort of things. And let alone all that, I could be locked up

for ten years or thereabout for taking you. It'd be against the law!"

"Against the law!" She had been visibly indignant while he denied her the prowess to do all that he himself could do, but this new argument awed her a little. He saw this, and pushed it.

"If it wasn't for that, honestly I'd like to take you, Val. I could leave you somewhere safe, while I went to the risky places. But a kid like you can't come by herself, your being willing to come doesn't count. The law says somebody has to look after you; you have to go to school for another year anyhow, and you belong to your stepmother until you're twenty-one years old, or till you get married."

"But people *do* run away," she urged.

"Yes, and they get caught, too, as a general thing."

"Well, couldn't we take a chance?"

"It wouldn't be you that would be locked up," he reminded her basely.

She was silenced from further pleading, but by no means reconciled either to destiny or to Greg. To his offered sympathy and consolation she snapped:

"Well, you're going and I'm not. That's settled, but for goodness' sake, don't *talk* about it. You can throw me off the train when we get to Southampton. I'll get home all right."

"It makes me feel simply rotten to have you take it like that. I'd rather have done anything than have disappointed you this way. I never dreamed——"

"Well, shut up now, can't you?"

Her little chin was shaking, and he guessed that the voice would not have been so savage if tears had not threatened. He wanted to put his arm around her, but refrained.

"*Southampton!*" chanted the conductor.

Val jumped up and scurried to the door, and Sherril followed after a minute's delay occasioned by the wedging of his suit case. In this interval other passengers had pushed between them,

and when at last he had made his way to the platform, she was not to be seen.

"The first little girl out——" he demanded of the man at the gate. "Which way did she go?"

"Couldn't say."

But outside the station, already ensconced in a corner of a trolley car waiting to start, Greg caught sight of Val. He hesitated.

The car would take her back in an hour, and she had shrugged contempt of any retributory measures by Mrs. Morgan. His own plans called him; he remembered that to lose this train might mean the missing of all his connections and, as he stood uncertain, the trolley clanged and moved on its way.

Greg doubled back to the train again.

#### CHAPTER IV.

The trolley deposited Val in her native streets at a later hour than had ever seen her out before. Snow had begun to fall, and she passed little knots of students, black against the whitening pavement. Several were inclined to be conversational, facetious.

"Whither away so late, my pretty maid?"

Or:

"Does your mother know you're out?"

Mrs. Morgan was waiting up, worried, overtired, out of temper.

"Where've you been?" she demanded uncompromisingly.

But Val was in no mood to brook scolding; the disenchantment of that night had been too profound, too shattering. It gave her the dignity of a great grief.

"I went out," she vouchsafed. "I've come back now. I'm going to bed." And brushing past her stepmother, who tried to catch at her wrist and detain her, she made for her own room and locked the door.

She had shown the prudence to hide

her bundle under a basket chair on the side porch, so that Mrs. Morgan, drawing the chain across her front door with stormy mutterings, did not suspect that an evasion had been contemplated. The girl had no business to be gadding about at that time of night and it was clearly her duty to rip any such tendency in the bud. Mrs. Morgan framed some forcible remarks for delivery to her stepdaughter in the morning.

Afterward Mrs. Morgan traced much of her difficulty with Val to her weakness on that night of the girl's first serious insubordination.

"I should ought to have let her have it then and there," she was wont to say. "But a lady that keeps a boarding house has to think of times and seasons!"

She had made her row in the morning hours when the house was empty of students, and found more than her match in a new, steely Val, brutally callous over bewilderment and bleeding within that she would not show.

She had lost Greg Sherril as well as the deceitful prospects he had opened to her; she had learned something of the breathless possibilities of life, only to learn that she was shut out from them, that she was tied to the little college town till her majority at least, which, to fifteen, has much the same meaning as forever. Most of all she was broken-hearted, humiliated, embittered. She thought that she hated Greg, and never wanted to see him again, but in reality she missed him achingly.

And the whole strong ferment of her feelings, coming at so critical a stage of her development, had upon Val an effect that others than her stepmother soon noticed.

She became reckless, impatient of her home duties, impossible to manage. Since she was never to get away from Darthurst, why not get whatever excitement was possible out of a town full of young men as eager as herself for distraction?

At fifteen it didn't matter so much that she should go skating or rowing with a group of students who boarded with her stepmother. At sixteen, at seventeen, it did not look as well, particularly when such parties were organized for the evening, with fires on the ice and other drinkables than hot chocolate, and when her acquaintance extended till it took in nearly every one of sporting proclivities in college, and with particular warmth the members of the fraternity whose grounds adjoined Mrs. Morgan's back yard.

These were years, too, which added to her prettiness amazingly. The natural tendency of the college youth to look down on the girls of the town, to prefer girls imported from a distance, could not hold in the case of Val Morgan. Her beauty was of the kind about which there could hardly be two opinions; the artist and the tired business man caught their breath simultaneously before her vivid coloring, her purity of line, the heavy-lashed, richly brown eyes whose power she had learned so early. The boys had to admit that never a showgirl of their admiration, never the star of a prom, from as far as New York itself, had anything on Val Morgan.

She was, in their phraseology, a peach, a pippin, some queen, and right there when it came to a rag.

New students desired to meet her with considerable trepidation, wondered at the familiarity of their introducers, misinterpreted it sometimes, and had then their lesson from Val, by which they too learned to treat her rather as a boy than a girl, and to keep strictly to themselves any pleasure or the reverse that the contemplation of her beauty gave them. She was not sentimental.

She was up to anything herself; she had never yet taken a dare, and suggested half their most successful exploits, sometimes giving aid without

which those feats could not have been accomplished. It was she who telephoned to Professor Hodges and, by an admirable simulation of distress, secured his absence from his classroom during a critical half hour, while that chivalrous scholar hurried to the hotel to succor a fictitious Mrs. Smith, and thereby suspended a fatal class examination. It was she who, representing herself as a snake charmer in professional life, bought Beelzebub, afterward the well-known mascot of the Alpha Delta Mu fraternity, from an owner who had flatly refused to sell to the college boys, giving as his sufficient reason, "Boys, I know well enough the sort of tricks you'd be up to with him! I'd feel myself sort of responsible if that rattlesnake was to bite anybody."

Val had, of course, one great disadvantage as compared even with the daughters of poorly paid college professors; her clothes were pitiable. She had no kind aunt or rich cousins, no interested women friends, to supplement the stingy little sums Mrs. Morgan was willing to spend on her stepdaughter. And she wore a blue serge sailor suit with patched elbows for two whole winters, and in summer little straight dresses of the cheapest lawns made unskillfully by herself.

Two beautiful things she had, gifts from Greg Sherril. One was sent a few days after his departure, the other some weeks later. He had bought her hurriedly, his eye caught by it in a Fifth Avenue shop window as he forged past, a very large, very soft scarf of ivory crêpe de Chine, deeply fringed, softly incrustated over every inch with delicate embroidery, and in San Francisco he had selected a more suitable present, a set of black fox furs, with a shivering thought, as he left for the tropics, of the black New England winter, and Val's thin tweed coat and muffless hands.

She flung each gift as it came into an unused drawer; not till much later did

she forgive Greg enough to make use of them. He had been gone two years when the third offering came, and by this time she could read the handwriting that addressed it without a surge of rancor. He had written her, she thought, a long letter at last, for the envelope, with its queer and exciting postmarks of fabulous places, was fat to bulging. But it proved to contain only a pair of stiff correspondence cards, and between them, wrapped in dirty cotton wool, a string of pearls. On one card was written:

DEAR VAL: I hope you will like these. I am having no end of a time out here. Some day, soon, I mean to write you a long letter. Have you forgiven me yet? Always faithfully, your pal,  
GREG.

She looked without too much enthusiasm at his latest gift. Compared to the furs, the scarf, it seemed almost a little shabby! Nearly every girl she knew had a string of the things, and they could be procured from about ninety-eight cents upward. These probably had cost more than that, for Mrs. Morgan had enviously declared that the foxes had "set that fellow back" not less than a hundred dollars. Perhaps the pearls had been as much as ten. She tried to think so, but, looking at them closely, she doubted it. Eva Myers' pearls were all exactly alike and bigger than these and each completely round, and the chain they were strung on was real gold, while these things—she twisted them around her fingers and held them to the light—were of carelessly different sizes, and many were a little flattened, one almost pear-shaped. Moreover they were strung—she saw to her disgust—on a mere cheap, common white cord!

But they brought the memory of Greg Sherril back to her, and she would value them, she decided, because he had sent them. By now she was old enough to know that indeed he could not have taken her with him, she could absolve



him of blame for that cruel disappointment of her childhood. She remembered him far more magnificent than he had truly been, contrasted him with the students of the present year to their utter disadvantage, erected him, in fact, into a sort of half-god and tutelary genius of her own. He had shown her the world and the glory thereof, and then he had disappeared into it, leaving her stranded and forlorn indeed, but, after the first year, no longer resentful.

In this quarter she still hugged her grievance, still felt herself ill-used and entitled to every compensating bit of enjoyment she could wring, at any price, out of her narrow surroundings. For a time indeed she managed to extract a satisfactory amount of excitement; she relearned what every infant discovers—only to be coerced out of the fruits of the discovery—that the thing forbidden is, by virtue of the prohibition itself, a thing pleasurable. At Val's time of life, with the authority over her only that of a woman burdened with work and preoccupied with her own children, it was possible to get every advantage from the bit of knowledge.

Accordingly she stayed out late at night and, having locked her door, stayed in bed later in the mornings; emancipated herself from her various duties of marketing and dusting and bed-making, one by one; learned to smoke in defiant contravention of poor Mrs. Morgan's frantic forbiddings, and extorted tribute of cigarettes from all the boarders.

Some black pages of the record she was filling up against herself had to do with the fraternity house opposite. It was temptingly easy, Val found, to hang from her window sill by her hands and drop springily, with bent knees, to the dirt of a flower bed only some five feet below her dangling soles. For the return she needed only a stocking-footed athlete, silent, heavily breathing as she sprang from his shoulder to fling an

arm across the inner sill, and slowly writhe herself to safety.

She revised her tactics at about this time, finding that give-and-take comradeship brought her sometimes less than the consideration she thought her due. A youth she had approved and favored for his football had slighted her for an insignificant fashion-plate daughter of the proprieties, had broken an engagement to go skating with Val for a chance invitation from the other girl to tea. And later he had avoided her clumsily at a ball game to which he had taken the same young person.

Val watched Miss Smith's artless methods with a fierce contempt and amusement. That was the sort of thing they wanted, was it? That affected vivacity, that coy upward look followed by the demure lowering of lashes, the appeals for information, the hanging on words from male lips. She could do such things as well as Amy Smith, she ventured to think, and experiments in this line would be a new game, possibly amusing.

She had a field wider than falls to most girls, and the advantage of complete indifference to her subjects. She evolved a method finally, in something of the cold scientific spirit with which a chess player evolves his game. It is not to be denied that she led her victims on. But she gave them nothing for their pains. To a faithful servitor, a kiss at his final departure from college. To a presumptuous one, uncorked vials of venoms, scourgings, salt in his wounds.

She had by now, of course, the worst of names in Darthurst, and the faculty women who had before lamented that they could do nothing for her because of Mrs. Morgan, now sympathized with poor Mrs. Morgan for having that terrible girl on her hands.

Val herself was conscious, at twenty, of a wistful interest in their decorous doings, a sense that the boys who were



her only associates were callow young animals, greatly alike and too immature to be interesting. She thought furtively that it would be nice to be greeted as a friend by that sweet-looking Mrs. Lamont, to get inside Mrs. Hitchcock's evergreen hedge. She vilified both ladies, making remarks that in one or two instances came around to their subjects again. Val had a better chance really of being presented at court in England than of entering faculty circles.

It was inevitable that, as she grew older, certain dispositions of the college youths appealed less to her. The clubbings and other indignities to which they subjected each other in the name of fraternal skirmishes struck her no longer as funny, but as merely disgusting, and some of the proceedings of which she learned revolted her.

She chanced to hear in detail everything that happened to Frederick Percival Henderson, and actually to see with her own eyes a part of it.

Henderson was the only son of Arnold Henderson, a man of such unquestionable importance that the student body had at once decided on strong measures to temper the aloof manner his son might be assumed to have. The project was the more appealing because young Fred was such an obviously unworthy heir to a resounding name and millions enough to antagonize the democratic mind. Without the money, the poor stick could never have hoped to make a decent fraternity; he was undersized, weedy, stuttering, and blotched.

Val was as cruel to him as any one at first. She said of him, in his hearing: "It's a what-is-it, isn't it? Where did they dig it up?" and "He looks like something the cat brought in!" Had she known it, this was really much worse to Freddy than the physical anguishes planned by the boys, for he had conceived a violent admiration for her at first sight.

Deeply hurt, he did not attempt to

meet her. He went to his room that night miserably rebellious, conscious of injustice in human lots. To be six feet tall—and that would have meant a gain of nearly six inches—he would have bartered his birthright willingly. Most girls were nice to him, but in his heart he knew that they all really felt just as that red-haired goddess in the boat-house had expressed herself, in vulgar, hurting, unforgettable phrases.

When, at eleven o'clock, his room was invaded and he was jerked from the bed where he lay wakeful, and he was tied, gagged, and hustled off to a more convenient spot for torment, young Henderson at first almost welcomed the diversion. He had known that hazing was a possible thing at college, and hoped to show himself game enough to win respect. But he hadn't supposed it would be quite so drastically unpleasant.

In his carefully tended childhood and adolescence, with his diet always supervised, and even his dentists expensively considerate, the wretched youth had known pain only through an occasional unpreventable tumble. Now he made its acquaintance with the ingenious devices of skilled torturers. The details need not be recorded, but he was sick and weak with what he had undergone when, some hours later, his joyous captois decided to add mental stress to his physical experiences.

"Say, I have a peach of an idea!" somebody shouted.

The amiable plan, acclaimed as it was unfolded, was to transport young Henderson to a distant and unfrequented wood, tie him to a tree, and inform him that the spot in which he found himself was simply crawling with rattlesnakes. In reality Beelzebub, the Alpha Delta Mu mascot, securely locked in his netted box, and hidden by a bush, would be the only representative of his kind within some hundreds of miles. But he might be relied on to rustle suggestively over the dried leaves which would be

put in with him, and to agitate his rattle at frequent intervals.

Bursting with the fun of the thing, the boys came back to town after having carried out their arrangements and shouted soothing farewells to the horrified victim. They were so merry under the front windows of the Morgans' house that Val, just in from a late moonlight party on the river, opened the door again and slipped out to them.

"You might let me in on it, if it's as good as all that!" she said, leaning over her gate.

The famous scarf draped her shoulders and fell gracefully over somewhat dragged skirts, to which the light was kind. Her face was bewitching, compelling as always, and they had no suspicion that she would not applaud. She got the whole story, in whispered rushes between snickers.

"In the Deer Ledge woods?" she probed for full particulars.

"Tell you where he is, Val," some one volunteered. "Remember that place you and I and Temple had a picnic once, under that big oak near the cave? He's tied right there!"

"Well, I think it was a disgusting thing to do," she said decisively, to their amazement. "You think you're funny, but you go a lot too far once in a while. If he's a raving lunatic in the morning, it'll be your fault. I've a good mind to make you go straight back and untie him."

"Make! Oh, come, Val!"

She didn't know the boy, and she was tired from her river party, too tired for the exercise of will which would be necessary to subdue them in their present mood. She made a gesture of disgust.

"Well, you know what I think of you, anyway!"

But inside the house, getting ready for bed, she found that she could not dismiss the matter so lightly. The thought of the wretched Henderson re-

turned upon her unnervingly. She didn't like snakes, though she had been clever enough to show no shrinking from Beelzebub before his masters, and she had put through that business of his purchase by sheer nerve. And the poor boy who was their victim was so pitiable a weakling, so unworthily selected for such cruelties! She knew several men who might spend the night in his position without the knowledge of it affecting her slumbers. But that little shrimp—really! It was like bullying a baby. Something would have to be done about it.

With a profane ejaculation she recognized what must be done, and who must do it. She put on again in petulant haste such garments as she had already taken off, transferred a stout Boy Scout knife from the pocket of a middy blouse to that of the sweater, better suited than the scarf to woods at night, and dropped from the window sill to the ground in her usual fashion.

The moon was high, and her road, except where it ran through forest, as clear before her as in daylight. She had crossed the fields under it less than an hour ago, but then it had been with a crowd of students joking and shouting, while her own voice and laughter soared over theirs. Now the night was wonderfully silent; the trees on the outskirts of the woods showed immobile, their trunks and almost leafless branches drawn in silver against obscure mysteries behind, and the air was cold and still.

Val was far from being frightened, and the sense that she was upon an adventure set her blood moving quickly; she no longer felt sleepy. But she had a three-mile walk before her, unaccompanied and, as often when alone, the fingers of one hand went to Sherril's pearls at her throat, and hooked there.

The wood road, when she reached it, was another matter from the broad highway. It was a mere cart track for

the hauling of timber, uneven, stone set, and so closely pressed upon by tall trees that hardly a flicker of moonlight fell on it. Val had to go slowly, picking her way; hesitating sometimes, for the semblance of the wood she could thread in the daytime was confused and deceitful now. Once she made a wrong turning, and for an interval in which her heart thumped rather vigorously, she struggled to regain the main track in some uncertainty whether she should reach it.

She found it nearly at the spot she was bound for, and checked herself, startled, at a choked, muttered, half sob of "My God!" that sounded from a yard or two ahead.

"What a shame!" she thought hotly, and ran forward as she might have run to end the distress of a child or an animal, calling out reassuringly.

"Where are you? It's all right! Rescue party!"

The ill-treated boy had more than a spark of manliness in him yet.

"Don't come any nearer—whoever you are," he shouted. "There's rattle-snakes!"

"That's just their disgusting lies, Mr. Henderson," said Val. "I have a knife here to cut that rope."

"It's no lie. Oh, Lord, I wish it was! I've been hearing the rattle, I tell you! Stop please—I can't permit you, whoever you are. Listen! Didn't you hear that?"

Beelzebub had rattled blood-curdlingly.

"It's one snake, and he's in a screened box," Val explained. She was beside him now, and had her knife open for dealing with his bonds. The moon swam from behind a dark little drift of cloud and showed Fred her face, close to his eyes, unreal, softly perfect, yet alive with personality. He recognized her in the same moment that the sense of his debt to her rushed upon and shook him.

"You came out here, all alone, on my account—you!"

His eyes bulged.

"That was nothing; I like to walk at night," Val said hastily. "I'm only glad I happened to hear what was up. You must have had a simply rotten time. I shall never speak to any of that gang again."

She had commented on Fred with the most pitiless disdain only that afternoon. Now, however, having saved him from hours of prolonged horror, she began to feel toward him that personal interest, that indulgence and good-will, always generated in rescuer or benefactor.

"I wish I'd thought to bring some brandy," she said anxiously. "You've three miles to walk, and you're all in. Lean on me as much as you like, I'm awfully strong."

Henderson, weakened by the night of suffering and strain, was near crying at the melting pity in her voice. That she, the splendidly scornful goddess of the afternoon, should show him such undreamed-of kindness now was unnerving, gratifying to the point of pain.

"I say—you know——" he gulped incoherently. "This is worth it all, your being so angelic. I only wish it was farther."

But whatever the gallantry of the spirit, Fred's flesh was put to it, with all Val's support, to make the three miles between Deer Ledge woods and his rooms.

Yet as he limped under the high, light-suffused sky, her arm actually behind his unworthy shoulders, his arm wonderfully permitted to drag about her waist, he was for the most part in a half swoon of bliss. It could never happen again, he knew, this nearness to her, her exclusive preoccupation in his insignificant self: Let him therefore savor it to the full. He had a sensation of division, of having his being simultaneously in two worlds—in a heaven where he quivered because she touched

him, and in some lower place where he must toil on endlessly past his strength, every dragging movement an effort and a pain.

#### CHAPTER V.

It was Val's luck, of course, that they were seen as they neared his rooms. Seen at past four in the morning, under a clear moonlight that made recognition unmistakable, seen near the campus walking with their arms about each other.

It was Mrs. Hitchcock who saw them. She had been up all that night with a croupy child, and, the worst over, had stepped out of the steamy, close bedroom on to an upstairs porch for a breath of fresh air.

She was no gossip, but this was not the sort of thing which one keeps to oneself. In a sense, the honor of the college was concerned. Arnold Henderson was too important a man for his son's entanglements to be viewed lightly; it was undesirable, of course, that any boy at Darthurst should be led astray by Val Morgan—she was so forceful an individual, he so limply weak, that the situation presented itself in this way, unavoidably, to Mrs. Hitchcock—but in this particular case it would be, she felt, regrettable in the extreme.

That was the word which found most favor with the college lights when, during the ensuing weeks, they discussed the obvious danger of unfortunate developments. Everybody felt that it would be regrettable if Fred Henderson became involved, in any way, with a Darthurst girl. His father, they knew, was ambitious for his son and heir. He undoubtedly would prefer a New York society girl for his daughter-in-law; at least not a poor college professor's daughter.

The girl, one felt, would stop at nothing. She was the sort of creature, the faculty women felt, who brings suits

for breach of promise, the sort of shameless disgrace to womanhood who will wallow in publicity for the sake of dollars. They admitted that they did not know her. But her flaunting carriage, her defiant glances, her escort of all the least satisfactory students, they knew, and they surmised the worst.

Mrs. Hitchcock's evidence was damning enough, but if it needed corroboration young Henderson supplied it by a publicly displayed devotion to Val which was both abject and blatant. He neglected every college activity to be with her, and she permitted it as one permits the fawnings of a dog whose tail one has separated from a tin can. He besieged her with presents, trailed her in his newest car, begged her endlessly, if the faculty had known it, to marry him. He pointed out to her the advantages of being his wife, and Val, who wanted money, having found nearly everything she wanted to do blocked at the outset by the lack of it, sometimes caught herself thinking that he offered one way out.

But then being married would mean having Freddy around all the time. She felt kindly toward him; but even as it was, she found that he was there more often than seemed strictly necessary. And accordingly she said, "No, Freddy!" with unwavering firmness whenever he brought up the subject, as he did nearly every day.

The situation confronting the college heads was one without a precedent. The problem of the dangerous woman they had encountered before, but Val was, after all, though for social purposes it might be ignored, the daughter of a professor, and could not be ordered out of town without ceremony. Diplomacy was demanded, and, it was reluctantly agreed at last, a certain amount of expenditure.

It was Mrs. Hitchcock who called upon Val's stepmother—for the first time—with tactfully worded proposals.

"You see our position I'm sure, Mrs. Morgan," she perorated, after ins and outs of explanation which had been listened to helplessly. "We've all felt much distressed for a long time to think that dear Professor Morgan's daughter was not having the advantages which, of course, I know you are as anxious to give her as any one. I think you are quite wonderful, I assure you, to have done as much for her as you have, with all those dear little boys of your own to look after too. I admire your independence and resourcefulness very much!"

"Indeed, it's the truth I've had a hard time. And the girl is that hard-headed. Mrs. Hitchcock, there's things I could tell you that you'd never believe. If the truth was told, I live in the fear of her disgracin' herself and me. I trace it all back to when she was fifteen—she was a good little thing enough till then, and all of a sudden she took a turn—I shall always blame myself for not taking a strap to her that night. It's only the other day she says to me, she says——"

Mrs. Hitchcock's finely modulated voice cut across the turbid rush of words her hostess was ready to pour out endlessly if unchecked.

"So we're *quite* in agreement about dear Valerie, aren't we? I see I can be perfectly frank with you, and that you are alive to the danger of her position here, as I felt sure such a sensible woman would be. She is so unfortunately pretty, and we can't be sure of the characters of so many young men——"

"Our idea, Mrs. Morgan, was that it would benefit your stepdaughter in every way to receive some training at this time, training such as Darthurst can scarcely give her, for earning her own living, as she is surely old enough to do. Professor Morgan, we all know, left little or nothing. She must be living practically at your expense."

"If you get her to do a hand's turn of work, Mrs. Hitchcock, it's more than

I've been able to do in the last five years."

The visitor smiled her sweet, persistent smile.

"Yet I think you said she hadn't attended school for the past three years! I don't think we are taking the situation in hand any too soon! There are so many openings for women nowadays. She might go to Boston and attend a business school, where she could learn to be a bookkeeper or a stenographer. Or she might study dietetics, a fascinating study, and I'm told it leads to excellent positions. It would be wise to be guided by the girl's own tastes and aptitudes, don't you think? Talk to her about it, Mrs. Morgan. Tell her simply that old friends of her father's have made this offer, and are particularly anxious that whatever line she decides on should be taken up at once. We will provide her with sixty dollars a month for living expenses in addition to paying for whatever tuition she receives. We don't absolutely make it a condition that she shall live at the Y. W. C. A., but confidentially, Mrs. Morgan, may I hope that *you* will make a point of it? Because, though work is a great safeguard, of course, we all know there are dangers for a handsome girl in every large city!"

Val came in an hour after Mrs. Hitchcock had left to find her stepmother still rocking madly in the parlor, and heard the startling news with delight, when she could bring herself to believe in it.

Sixty dollars a month and freedom! Boston, or possibly even New York! She'd get away, anyhow, from the deadly little place where she had so hungered for change, which she had exhausted so utterly.

She would have leaped to accept any proposal which would take her away from Darthurst; she had, indeed, of late been casting about for means to procure the mere railway fare to Boston, where



she thought she might conquer a living by, perhaps, going on the stage. Some saving prudence had happily restrained her from pawning a gift or two from Fred Henderson and taking the plunge. With this magnificent bit of luck, all the possibilities were in her grasp, and the worst of the dangers guarded against.

"For how long do I get the money?" she asked practically.

"They thought you could learn enough to get a good position in a year."

"A year!"

Oh, in a year she would have conquered the city.

"I'd rather go on the stage than anything."

"Now don't talk nonsense!" said Mrs. Morgan sharply. "They want you should be a credit to your pa."

"Who are 'they,' anyway?" the girl asked suddenly.

"Friends of your dear pa's," said Mrs. Morgan, with a touch of mystery in her voice, "who didn't wish their names to be known."

"They're damn fine sports, whoever they are!"

She employed profanity from time to time, because it brought applause from the boys, and as unfailingly provoked her stepmother. But this time the shocking adverb came from the heart.

Val went about in a state of feverish exaltation comparable only to that of those days before Greg Sherril left college, when she had nursed dreams doomed to be killed. But this time she felt secure; there could be no slip now between her thirsty lips and the cup of life at last held to them. Her preparations were made openly; board was engaged for her at the Y. W. C. A. in Boston—time enough to change after she had looked about her—and it had been determined that she should take up the training of a librarian.

Not that she intended troubling the Library School with her attendance.

But it seemed to be a necessary preliminary to the departure she was as anxious as any one to hasten that a course of some sort should be definitely selected, and her name enrolled for it.

## CHAPTER VI.

"I only wish I had the nerve to shoot myself, that's all."

"Don't be an idiot, Freddy!"

"The only reason I don't is because it would make my mother feel so badly; she's fond of me, Heaven knows why. I could just stand it while I saw you once in a while." Once in a while!

"And could keep telling myself that some day, perhaps— And now you're going away to-morrow!"

"Ten-forty-five train, praise be!"

"You don't mind what I feel a bit. Of course you don't *know* what I feel. It's no use talking."

"Well, it's not. I've let you kiss me. I don't see what more you can expect me to do."

"Well, it was worth living nineteen years for that. Val, let me kiss you again?"

"Only one, Freddy," she said resignedly. "There! Now good night, and for mercy's sake, buck up!"

Perhaps it was because her nerves were exasperated that Val, going upstairs to lay the few last things in her trunk, lost her temper so completely on finding her two youngest stepbrothers capering in her new hat and suit coat upon the landing. With this pair she had waged guerrilla war since their infancy, and not even the fact that she need scarcely ever set eyes on them again could prevent her from pouncing on them and administering a vigorous smacking.

Mrs. Morgan, summoned by their yells, broke into the scene from the bathroom doorway.

"You needn't go out of your way to



make us all thankful to get rid of you," she told Val with a mother's defensive passion. "We're all thanking our stars already, and it's a bad thing to be twenty years old and have your family rejoice at the prospect of losing you, and the town you were born in ready to pay you a remittance to keep away!"

Val had had no illusions on the first head, but the last was new to her.

"Pay me to keep away! What on earth do you mean by that?" she demanded.

Her stepmother was angry enough to tell her, exaggerating the truth.

"I mean what I say! You're a disgrace to the place and a danger to the college boys, and for fear of something bad happening the faculty took up a collection to get you out of the town—that's the long and the short of it!"

"You said some friends of my father's——"

"They've all been his friends for a long time, and never felt a call to do anything for you before, or for me and my children that are just as much your pa's as you are, now. It's to end the scandal of your carrying on like you do that they're putting up that money for you to go away, and now you know it."

"And now I shan't go," said Val very quietly.

"Shan't go! You've got to go."

"I haven't got to do anything of the sort, and I won't, and nobody can make me. Oh, the disgusting, evil-minded, prying old pigs! Send me out of town! Out of *this* town!"

Mrs. Morgan was aghast now at what she had done.

"If you want to go, and they want to send you, what is it to you what they do it for?"

"I won't be packed off to please them, that's all. What harm do they think I do here, I'd like to know?"

"It's that little Henderson boy that's always underfoot that they're worried

about chiefly. You know his father's a big man."

"Well, Freddy isn't. I never heard such nonsense. I never——"

"Val, I'd urge you to it, if I thought there was a chance, but of course the boy would never carry it that far. It came around to me through another lady; Mrs. Hitchcock said it, too, that they're afraid of you hooking that Fred Henderson—getting him to marry you!"

"Getting him to marry me."

Val sat down suddenly on the edge of her open trunk; she saw that here was something amusing, but she felt no inclination to laugh, being too coldly angry for even the bitterest mirth.

For the second time she had been led to believe that she was to win free of Darthurst, and for the second time she was mocked and thrust back. It seemed impossible that she should go on living at home, not because she and Mrs. Morgan had quarreled, for that happened at least once a week, but because she had felt herself too nearly free from her prison to find a return to it bearable.

Nor could she take the offered money now, with the gross insult that accompanied it.

But she could revenge the insult in the only way "they" could feel, and perhaps it weighed with her a little that she could make one individual, now miserable to the thought of suicide, happy beyond any of his hopes.

"You'll change your mind again after you've slept on it," her stepmother said anxiously. "You'll get up in the morning and go off by the ten-forty-five train like it's arranged!"

"Um," said Val enigmatically.

"Good night!"

She shut her door and leaned against it, her eyes on the carefully packed trunk. Once there had been a paper-wrapped bundle of clothing.

She had been a child then, and helpless. Now she was a woman, with a woman's weapons.

## CHAPTER VII.

In the morning she was not to be found, and a distracted and disheveled Mrs. Morgan invaded Mrs. Hitchcock's austere beautiful drawing-room that afternoon, with lamentations and confession.

The other woman, nervously restless and a little short of breath, had no reassurance to offer. Fred Henderson, too, was missing. If this horrible news about Valerie were true, then all that they had striven to avert they must have precipitated. The boy's father had already been telegraphed for. Half a dozen instructors, admitted now to full confidence, were soon scouring the country in search of the runaways. Mrs. Hitchcock would make it her own business to telephone every minister in a large radius, warning him under no pressure to perform the ceremony that two eloping children might ask.

Mrs. Morgan, feeling herself dismissed, yet not quite knowing how to go, sat and sobbed on a Heppelwhite chair which only just sustained her weight, while Mrs. Hitchcock talked authoritatively to one pastor after another. She was thinking about going at last, just unobtrusively sidling out of the door, when a kind of cultured shriek from the telephone startled her to heavy subsidence again.

"Too late! You can't mean to say, Dr. Cawthorne—" . . . But don't you know who the young man is? Oh, this is horrible, horrible. He is the only son of Arnold Henderson! . . . You have no idea where they went? . . . Annulment proceedings, of course! His father is on his way here now. Preposterous carelessness!"

She slammed down the receiver and turned to Mrs. Morgan, gasping for breath.

"They're married, Mrs. Morgan!" she said tragically.

"Married!"

There was hardly as much horror as there should have been in the woman's tones; there was even a slowly dawning gratification. Val might be a selfish, thankless, serpent's tooth of a step-daughter, but if she had a share of the Henderson millions to play with, she might be expected to make some return for the bringing-up that had been given her. And she had always been fond of one of the boys, young Ruthven.

"The marriage," Mrs. Hitchcock swept on, "will have to be annulled. Mr. Henderson wired us to expect him on the six-forty-seven. If we can locate the wretched children by then—we should be able to, we know where they were married at least—there will be no real harm done. Mr. Henderson must feel that we've acted with decision and dispatch."

"Then Val won't be married after all?"

"I've no doubt," Mrs. Hitchcock said significantly, "that Mr. Henderson will, in that case, make some suitable arrangement for Val."

The scent was found and the chase taken up, without waiting for the arrival of Arnold Henderson. Mrs. Hitchcock, who had executive gifts rather thrown away as a general thing, sent Mrs. Morgan home and became extremely active in directing the pursuit. Searchers were sent to the town, shepherded by the too obliging Dr. Cawthorne, and it was soon reported that the big touring car had stood outside the hotel for a full hour, while the married children ate lunch inside, and had then dashed away eastward along a highroad which soon changed its direction. Back in Dart-hurst, Mrs. Hitchcock and her aids bent over road maps much as generals follow the course of the action they direct.

The car was a ninety-horse-power roadster, capable, as Fred had shown again and again to the ire of village constables, of doing seventy miles an hour.

They wouldn't, of course, go continuously as fast as that, and here was the logical town in which to stop for dinner, in which, perhaps, to spend the night, unless young Fred was ambitious to make the run to New York without stop except for nourishment, a thing possible but not overprobable. Soon an underling had the town on long distance, and was describing Fred and Val to the proprietors of its hotels, with instructions to telephone at once if such a pair in such a car should stop.

Applied intelligence was successful, as nearly always. Before Arnold Henderson's arrival, while her husband was down at the station awaiting him, Mrs. Hitchcock was called to the telephone to learn the exact whereabouts of the elopers.

#### CHAPTER VIII.

Val loved the long rush in the powerful, deep-seated car. She had used it often enough before, but she had never had the exhilaration of the onward flight that contemplates no returning. She felt quite affectionate toward Fred, who had given her her revenge and was throwing this into the bargain. It occurred to her that a good many of her dreams might be made to come true now, for money surely was a thing she need never think about again, and the boy she had married, she felt confident, had no will but hers.

She had Greg Sherril's black foxes, a little mangy after five years' wear, about her shoulders and, looking down at them superciliously she hesitated between a whole long coat of that soft gray fur, or of that opulent black; she knew the names of no rich furs or fabrics, beyond a vague novel-derived predilection for sables, which she would not have recognized if they had been spread under her eyes. But even in Darthurst there had been visiting princesses, and Val knew the effect she

wanted to achieve, if she was still ignorant of the means to it.

Greg's short string of pearls, already a trifle tight around her full young throat, it would probably be better not to wear at all any more—though for sentimental reasons she would always keep it. She didn't much care for pearls anyhow, even real ones. Fred would buy her emeralds and diamonds.

"Oh, do we get out here?"

"It's way after six, and we didn't stop for tea. If we go on, there's no place anywhere near that's half as good." He was reasoning just as Mrs. Hitchcock had divined he would. "I did aim to take you to a good hotel the first night!"

She got out of the car and preceded him into the hotel lounge. Her clothes, except for the furs, were the serviceable unpretentious things which Mrs. Hitchcock had chosen for her, but thoughtfulness of this sort seldom extends to details, and a hole in her stocking just over the top of the worn brown oxford—for shoes can't be bought by mail, and that purchase was to have been made by Val herself in Boston—showed a circle of white heel as big as a quarter. She scorned veils, and had been in a fast car most of the day. She did not look like the daughter-in-law of Arnold Henderson, though she had a Bacchante's beauty in dishevelment.

Fred, giving orders as to private sitting rooms and the dinner to be served there presently, over which he was to confer with the head waiter, was conscious from time to time of a faint qualm. Val herself, a little daunted as yet by these complicated splendors which he commanded with such assurance, and wondering inevitably what all this was going to cost, had no sense, as Fred had, of another reckoning which impended. She had never seen Arnold Henderson, of whom her young husband had been afraid all his life.

He had never before openly defied his

father. This marriage, from the home point of view, he knew as well as Mrs. Hitchcock, would be indefensible. But surely when father looked at Val——

He looked at her himself for reassurance. She had gone on to freshen up a bit before dinner.

She had taken off her dress and washed her face with cold water, and now she was taking down her red hair. Life and luster sprang into its heavy waves as she brushed it. It began to run like flame, to spray out and follow the brush, to snap electrically and excitingly. Her bare shoulders gleamed through it pearl-like. She had on a scant taffeta petticoat, rather short, changeably blue and green, and even if her stockings had a hole in one heel, they were of some tinny approximation to silk, and fitted smoothly over the ankles.

Fred's face flamed suddenly with pride. He went over to her and swept her smooth, lifted arms into the circle of his own. He was usually timid, but her softness, the fragrance of her floating hair intoxicated him, gave him the courage that lies in wine. He gripped her with all his strength, and kissed her, not as he had kissed her the night before on her sufferance, but frenziedly.

Afterward Val herself wondered why she hadn't been prepared for something of the sort. But now, as he held her through the startled moment before she

had gathered the strength to push him away, she was conscious only of disgust. She forgot that one of her motives for marrying him—dwarfed, to be sure, by its fellow—was to make him happy, and that kissing her made him happy. This was a little too much! The nerve!

She had a stiff hairbrush in her hand, and as with one vigorous young arm bent across his breast she forced him back, with the other she swung her weapon, bristle-side to the attack.

Across his face, assaulting at once cheek, nose, and mouth, the brush struck full, a blow which was no joke and couldn't for a moment be thought of as a joke, a blow which smarted intolerably and brought a hundred tiny points of redness to the wounded area.

"Get out of here!" cried Val furiously.

"You—you—*Val!* How could you?" Tears sprang between Fred's red-rimmed eyelids. He was fighting for self-control, against hurts physical and of the heart and spirit. "Oh! *Val—oh!*"

She was taller than he and at no disadvantage, and she was quite unmoved by his anguish. She put her hands on his shoulders ungently. With vicious pushes she propelled him, nearly sobbing now, from the room.

Behind him she closed and locked the door.

TO BE CONTINUED.

## RESOLUTION

SO long as love has need of me  
I can be humble as the grass  
Whose blades sway with the running wind  
When it would pass.

But if love had no need of me,  
In pride I would lift up my face,  
And be remote as gates of pearl  
Closed upon Allah's dwelling place.

MARGUERITE WILKINSON.



# Summer Husbands

By Charles Hanson Towne

Author of "The Old Crowd," "The Feathered Nest," etc.

LETITIA hoped it wasn't Harlow ringing her up. Yet he generally did at this hour, wanting her for dinner, asking her what she was up to. But it was so insufferably hot, and she felt just like lounging about at home, taking a cold snack on her own little roof garden, looking down on the vast, baking city, and dreaming the evening away.

As she walked languidly to the telephone, she made up her mind that she'd turn Harlow down to-night no matter what he wanted her to do. He would bore her, she felt sure. She couldn't stand his Southern drawl on such an evening; and he always told her how little he minded the heat, because he was a Georgian. To hear that to-night, when she was so worn out, would be the last straw.

But it wasn't Harlow. It was Leferts Saylor, whose wife was one of Letitia's best friends.

"I'm as lonesome as the dickens, Lish," he said, a pathetic note in his voice. "And I do wish you'd cheer me up. It's awful with Zoë in the mountains. She said you'd be just the one to lift me out of myself. I know a corking new place on the Drive, with awnings and a breeze blowing from the river, and dandy food. Will you come, Lish?"

She liked Leferts; he was so wholesome and handsome. There had been moments when she envied Zoë her possession of such a husband; and it sud-

denly dawned on her that she had never been alone with him. What was he like, *en tête-à-tête*? It wouldn't be a bad idea to find out. And after all, to spend the evening by herself—well, it wasn't the most exciting thing in the world.

"Course I'll come, Leff," she said sweetly over the wire. "Feel just like it. Come for me about half past seven, won't you? How's Zoë?"

"Oh, she's bully, Lish! So glad you're coming. I'll get an open taxi and we'll spin through the park. Good-by!"

And he clicked up the receiver as though he were finishing a business talk, as though a deal had been successfully consummated, and that was all there was to it. Letitia had that feeling, at any rate. She'd have liked him to hang on a little longer even though there wasn't anything to say. But then it was hot, and maybe Leff had been standing in a stuffy booth.

Now that she had definitely pinned herself down, she was sorry she had done so. The studio looked so cool in the late-afternoon light, and from the French window she could see her flaming geraniums on the edge of the low brick wall, the chaise longue in the garden, under the yellow umbrella, and she wondered why she hadn't decided to stay here, where she could just loll until bedtime. The hum of the city came up to her, and it was thrilling. This was the hour when taxis began to stir in earnest, and happy lovers flitted

here and there, through leafy greennesses, out into the country, along all the fascinating roads that took one from the scorching town. She liked New York in the summer because there were so few interruptions, and the handful of friends who were sensible enough to remain had a gorgeous time of it. Week-ends were perpetually offered one, and that was about all the country a healthy young person needed. The half-deserted city—it was fascinating: a few Western buyers on their way to Europe, and the married men one knew with a glow on their faces because they felt a sense of sudden delicious and delirious freedom. A good old town, after all! How it got into one's heart, and stayed there. Sometimes she hated it, but she noticed that the moment she got away from it she always wanted to come right back.

She had a new, smart little hat which she had bought only the day before, at a great bargain, as she walked up the uncrowded Avenue. It would be the very thing for Leff. And her little organdie frock—what could be more fetching on this sultry evening? Letitia was one of those fluffy girls who look equally well in lace or furs, and after her cold shower she wasn't sorry at all that she was going out. She had been languid all day, unable to draw a thing. But then, the big advertising agency that had ordered some sketches was in no hurry. Things were slow in July, what with vacations and golf and sweltering days.

She supposed she ought to run out to Ohio and see her family, but the thought of a train trip was appalling, and it would be better to go in October, she had decided. But then the autumn rush would be on, and she'd have more work than she could possibly do. Well, she could go in the winter, or—

The bell rang, and Lefferts, looking cool and trim in a Palm Beach suit and a Panama hat, stood at the door. He

was good looking; yes, indeed. And he had a smile which captivated both men and women. A boyish, fun-loving fellow, getting along amazingly in the insurance business, he was just the right companion for such an evening. Zoë wouldn't mind. In fact, she had told Letitia to "watch out for Leff and see that he didn't get too lonely." Pretty as Lish was, all her married friends looked upon her as peculiarly safe where their husbands were concerned, and they trusted them with her as they did with another man. For Letitia was reliable, and every one expected that when she got around to it, she would marry Harlow Bennett. Just now, of course, they realized that her work absorbed her to the utmost, and she was so financially independent that marriage hadn't yet definitely entered her bobbed head.

"How nice you look!" Leff said, coming in. "Gee! It's good of you to come out with me, Lish, and Zoë and I certainly appreciate it."

Why did he mention Zoë right away? He wanted her to understand in the very beginning that there was no foolish business connected with this engagement, perhaps. Well, if that was the case, she could be as prim as he desired.

"New York isn't so bad in July, is it, Leff?" she said. "Just look at my flowers out there," she pointed to the cozy, unbelievably pretty roof garden she had made for herself. "You wouldn't think you were in the heart of the great city, when you see that?"

"Gosh, no! Dandy, Lish. Say, you're a wonder, the way you fix things up. You've just got a knack, haven't you? Zoë says so."

There it was again! She'd be glad when they got into the taxi and whirled through the park. She could talk of the scenery then, and make him forget for a few moments that he was married.

But he never forgot it. No sooner were they speeding along than he told



her that his wife telegraphed him every day, and he pulled out a post card showing her in one of those foolish groups of young people, all standing in a row and laughing so that you couldn't recognize one from another.

"That's Zoë," he said, pointing to the third one from the left. "Looks healthy, eh, Lish? Guess the mountain air is doing her good. She needed a change. I run up for week-ends, but I manage to keep going through the other five days."

"Yes, I should think you could manage very well with girls like me around."

"Oh, it isn't girls I go out with—no, indeed, Lish!" He was a bit shocked. "I dine at the club a lot. Zoë wouldn't like it if I went out with any one but you."

No pretty woman likes to be told she is harmless, in so many words. Harlow didn't think her that. She wished now she'd gone out with him instead. Where was he, anyhow, slow-poke?

"Am I so—so unattractive as all that, Leff?" She tried to laugh, but inwardly she was furious.

"Well, I wouldn't put it that way," the boyish, foolishly frank Lefferts went on. "I don't know how to say it; I'm a stupid lump of lead, you know, not at all like Zoë."

"Yes, I know," Letitia seconded the motion at once, and smiled behind her fan. "See how lovely and green it is!" she continued. "Green! A wonderful color, isn't it?"

He never caught the sarcasm in her voice. He was as serious as a motorist trying to exonerate himself with a traffic policeman.

"Yes," he said heavily. "Where had all his lightness gone? 'You ought to know; you're an artist. Zoë always says you have a wonderful color sense.' He looked solemnly around at the trees and shrubs, but he didn't really see them. He was thinking of his little wife up in the mountains, God bless her!"

But the roof-top restaurant was mighty attractive, and Leff beamed when he saw that it met with Letitia's favor. If she put her O. K. upon it, then it was everything it should be.

"My discovery!" he cried, as though to impress her with the fact that he got around a great deal. "Here, I engaged that table by the railing, where we can look over the river."

It was a private house which had been converted into a delectable oasis in the burning Sahara of the city. Only about twenty people could be accommodated, but that, of course, made it all the more charming. Two or three girls, in white, cool frocks, dainty as shepherdesses, moved about taking orders, and Leff, as though he had created the place, drew attention to the decorations, the swift service, the thrilling view. The busses shot along the Drive beneath them, and in the majestic river the light of the setting sun was reflected like a big crimson flower of the Orient. A soft breeze blew from the Palisades, bringing mercy to the town, and Lish thought how lovely it would be to live here and watch the ever-changing panorama. A few battleships were anchored in midstream, and she could see the crew, in their white uniforms, buzzing about, some dropping into rowboats now and then and making for the shore. There was that sense of rest after a tired day, and every one on the roof looked refreshed and happy.

"It's the nicest spot you could have picked out, Leff," she said, and he beamed again at her encouragement.

He ordered with gusto.

"There's nothing too good for you, and the chicken here is corking. You've got to try it, Lish. Zoë loves chicken."

"And do you?" Lish asked, as though that were far more important. But he didn't catch her meaning.

"You bet!" he said, in his literal-minded way, and Lish began to think

how terrible it would be to be married to a man like this, and eat three meals a day with him or two or even one. Regularly, through the whole week, for a month; no, for a year—ye gods, for the rest of one's life! At the salad she was bored to extinction, and for the first time envied Zoë her absence in the mountains. Yet she telegraphed him every day!

She was suddenly conscious that Leff was saying:

"Our policies run any length of time, and if a young person takes one out at say, the age of twenty-two, he—or she, for that matter—can accumulate——"

The rest trailed off, and maybe the Palisades learned what one could accumulate. Certainly Letitia never found out. And if Leff was stupid enough to try to mix insurance with the salad dressing, he was an even greater fool than she thought him at the consommé! Did he talk this way at home?

When she tried to divert him by mentioning the sunset, he glanced westward for a second, and remarked, "Yes; that means it's going to be a scorcher to-morrow," and was back at his ice cream in a jiffy. He crossed his legs at the coffee, and drew forth an enormous cigar. Perhaps this would prove soothing. The mere woman in her realized that the mere man considers an after-dinner smoke the best part of the day, and she was wise enough not to suggest moving until the cigar was finished. But it looked, to her consternation, as if it would take hours, and he was almost as slow as Harlow now.

"Well, what do you think of my little place?" Leff asked, in solid comfort, blowing rings above his head, and looking across at her proudly. She did look lovely. "You know, Zoë has a dress something like yours," he observed. "I always like that sort of stuff."

"I'm glad it pleases you, Leff." She couldn't think of another word to say. Leff was one of those men who are

squeezed dry after about fifteen minutes, and, to her horror, when she glanced at her wrist watch surreptitiously, it was only nine o'clock. It was too soon to suggest that he take her home, and if she asked him up, he would be bound to want to sit on her roof garden until eleven, for he evidently had no resources within himself. Moreover, the breeze was enticing, and she loved the color of the sky. If only she had been alone!

"Say, how about a movie?" Leff suggested, rousing her from a dream.

"What? A movie?" Letitia thought he was joking. "Why, this is better than any movie in the world, Leff."

"Not the one I mean," he insisted, as though she were very ignorant. "There's one down at the Strand, they say, that's got this sunset beat a mile. It was taken in Africa, I understand. What do you say we go down: eh?"

Well, perhaps anything would be better than just sitting stupidly around.

"All right," she smiled. "I'm game."

They found themselves in a vast cavern, where it was said to be twenty degrees cooler than it was on the sidewalk. Yes, that was true, but the humor of watching a tropical artificial sunset on the screen when they might have remained and marveled at the real one on the Drive made her almost hysterical.

"Isn't it funny, Leff?" she said, and leaned toward him in the darkness.

"Funny? What's funny?" he wanted to know in his practical way. "Great photography, isn't it, Lish?" he went on. He crossed his legs; they were in a loge. His foot accidentally touched her daintily slipped foot.

"Oh, excuse me," he said quickly, withdrawing it.

"No harm done," Lish encouraged him. Inwardly she laughed.

"I don't want to seem to take any liberties," Leff explained. "There's one thing I like about you, Lish; you don't want men flirting with you all the time. You're restful; like Zoë, in a way."

"Good heavens!" she couldn't help exclaiming. "Don't you ever flirt with Zoë?"

"Oh, no! We've got over that; we're just good pals, like you and I."

It was the incorrect pronoun that did it. She could stand much, but not that. Women have broken engagements for less.

"I'm afraid I've got a headache, Leff," she said swiftly. "I'll have to ask you to take me home."

"Too bad," he said, rising. "And we were having such a good time."

She was never so happy as when she left him at her door.

"Thank God for my single-blessedness!" she cried, bursting out laughing as she let herself in at the studio, and saw her own quiet things, just as she had left them.

There was a note on the table, and a package from Harlow.

Where on earth have you been? I waited and waited for you. You didn't leave any message. I'll telephone in the morning. Here are some strawberries for your breakfast—big fellows from the South.

And they certainly were wonderful. Dear, reliable Harlow! After all, there were worse men in the world. She knew that with a vengeance to-night. But if he expected her to stick in the house every night, waiting for him to come around—well, she'd teach him a thing or two.

Men! What funny things they were! The geraniums on her roof garden must have wondered why a pretty girl sat, all alone, looking at the moon until very late, and laughing so happily to herself.

There was a letter from Margaret Hawthorne in her mail the next morning. She read it with her strawberries. It was from the seashore, and contained the original thought that "if it's hot here, what *must* it be in the city, my dear?" And then it went on pityingly of her husband, Patrick, who, like poor

Letitia—poor, indeed!—was bottled up in the terrible town, and wouldn't Lish be a darling and, if he rang her up, as Margaret had told him to do, go out with him to dinner some evening? The poor lamb needed attention—"just a little, my dear!"—and Margaret knew Lish was just the sweetest nature in the world and maybe was lonesome herself; in which case the wife was doing the unmarried girl a favor, after all!

"Darling of her! And darn these lonesome husbands!" Lish laughed, biting into another berry which was almost as big as a plum. "*I'm* never lonesome; why should they be? Don't they ever read, for heaven's sake, or write, or get in their demi-tasses, if not in their cups?"

Sure enough, Patrick rang up, within ten minutes. His mail must have contained instructions from his better half.

"Yes, I'll go," Lish said to him before he even had time to ask her. "And make it this evening, won't you, Pat? I must have diversion after last night." She didn't bother to explain what she meant.

Patrick took her eagerness as a good omen. "She likes me," he thought all day, as he worked over layouts for a big advertising campaign. He was the art director in an agency, with a spark of temperament, but mostly he was matter-of-fact, and shrewd when it came to beating artists down in their prices. He was said to keep more closely within his appropriation than any other director in the business, but as he sent vouchers through within two hours after a drawing came in, the illustrators flocked to him, in spite of his lower rate of payment.

By evening, when he put on his dinner jacket, and gave a last pleased look at himself in the mirror, he was convinced that Lish might be setting her cap for him, in the sense that she wanted to get some extra work in a dull season, and he determined to be

adamant. One mustn't mix business with pleasure, and he'd keep her, tactfully, in her place. He had used some of her drawings from time to time, and if she continued to please him, he'd give her work. But a woman would get no more from him than a man, even when she was as pretty as Lish Gorman. He had always been that way.

"I know a wonderful roof garden overlooking Broadway," he told her, bustling in at seven o'clock. He was always brisk about nothing. He thought it made an impression on people. He talked and walked as though he were racing through life and couldn't bear the thought of any one catching up with him. It never occurred to him that what he said might not be interesting, always. Sycophantic artists had to listen to his serial stories which had little point, but Lish heard him vaguely. It was, unfortunately, hotter than the night before, and she was looking forward with dread to the hours ahead of her. Why had she turned Harlow down again? Suppose Patrick turned out to be as dull as Lefferts? It was strange, they were rather clever in a group. Alone, they seemed impossible.

This roof garden was a symbol of Patrick. It was loud and bright, with masses of artificial flowers hanging from a pergola ceiling, and the arboreal walls were studded with half-concealed lights. A jazz orchestra played interminably; and coatroom boys, like little hounds, waylaid one in the hall and passed out checks swiftly, the while they snatched one's hat out of one's hand, or literally, from one's head.

The center of the room contained no tables. Here, on a space which seemed no larger than a hall bedroom, because so many people huddled upon it, dancing occurred between courses, and as Lish and Patrick entered, the band struck up, and instantly this floor was crowded. The couples waddled and squirmed, indulged in their joy with the

serious faces of reformers, and they were so close together that Lish thought of those tiny coins upon which men in prison, with little else to do, printed the Lord's Prayer. How so many words could be concentrated in so small a space was a mystery. It was equally a mystery how so many people could be huddled here.

Women of questionable social position, with eyes too darkened and lips too crimson and cheeks too white, followed fat, bald men to noisy tables which almost touched, and smooth head waiters played *Uriah Heep* to those they knew at once as excellent bait.

Letitia had known Patrick only in the privacy of his own home, or at some week-end down on Long Island. To see him now, hobnobbing with these sleek "captains," as they liked to be called, gave her a new impression of him. He evidently enjoyed being recognized by the rotund Louis, and he bore that look of self-conscious pride so many New Yorkers—yes, and Kansas Cityites—attain as they march down a crowded restaurant with a pretty girl and the knowledge that they are being led to the most desirable table in the room. He liked being stared at, recognized, possibly, as the art director at Patten & Molden's, Inc.

At least he had gone Lefferts one better in the very beginning, for he had taken the pains to order dinner in advance, and the sight of the crisp, cool melon on the table put Letitia in a good humor. He seemed to have anticipated her taste in everything, and when the cold salmon came on, and a mysterious salad of Louis' own making, she turned to look at the burning sunset, not at all unhappy that she had given him this evening.

"Doing much work these days?" Patrick asked in a tone which implied that as long as *he* opened the subject, it was all right. He wanted her to realize that he was not afraid to talk shop a bit.

They could drift back to personalities later. In fact, *he* would swing the talk this way or that, as his fancy prompted, just as he did at home, no doubt. Lish determined that she would let him have his way. Men were fascinating in their ignorance; they intrigued her with their self-assurance and blatant know-it-all.

"Yes, I'm frightfully busy," she responded to prove to him that she didn't give a hang whether he wanted her to do some work for him or not.

"Gee! That's a slick sign down there!" was his next remark, as he leaned over the railing; they were in a corner looking down upon Broadway where the city stars were beginning to flash, rivals of those in the heavens. He indicated a glowing board studded with illuminated letters which winked and blinked constantly, telling the world that somebody's shoe polish was the best ever, and soon the electric foot of a girl was shown, and an electric bottle, manipulated by an electric hand, poured electric polish on an electric shoe. "Great! I call that!" Patrick enthusiastically commented. "Wish our firm could think up something as nifty. But we will!"

He drew out a little notebook, and jotted down something.

"Always like to keep track of those new signs," he told Lish. "I keep a record of 'em all. Might come in handy some day. Never know."

Did he talk this way when he was alone with Margaret, Lish asked herself. Business, business, the American husband's fetish.

"But look at those lights in the sky!" Letitia said. "A star just went down over the Jersey shore."

"Oh, I'm much more interested in Broadway stars!" Pat laughed, not bothering to turn his head. "Gosh! The cleverness of these advertisements! Sometimes Margaret and I stroll out on Broadway just to look at them. I get some of my best ideas that way—oh,

not that I steal anything! Not on your life! But just as suggestions, now and then—you know what I mean. I guess you watch other artists' work in the same way, don't you?"

She assured him that she did, for what was the use of getting into an argument? Moreover, the ices were delicious, and the noise about them was so terrific that she would have had to yell, almost, in order to be heard. Was it possible that somewhere there were clean, long stretches of beach, where there was only the natural roar of the breakers, and not a syncopated orchestra that ground out eternal melodies? Why had she come here, when her own little garden would have been cozier and more restful, after the heat of the afternoon? But she supposed she had that disease all New Yorkers get sooner or later, a feverish fear of being alone the moment dusk descends.

Yet she needn't have been alone. There was always Harlow, as reliable as an engine on a track.

"Those siphons are the best I've ever seen," she heard Patrick saying. She thought he must be talking of something on the table, but as they had ordered no lithia water, she finally gathered that again he was peering down into the cavern of Broadway, enraptured with another sign he had discovered. Sure enough, he was entranced with two electric bottles that poured electric water into electric glasses. What was a pretty girl opposite him to this engaging sight?

"Guess the siphon business hasn't fallen off, even with prohibition," he observed, and smiled.

Ah! She had feared it—a discussion leading up to the eighteenth amendment, a cursing out of the Volstead Act! It was as inevitable as one's income tax, and she thought she would scream if he got deep into the subject.

"How's Margaret?" she inquired, just to change the trend of the conversation.



"Fine! Bully! The men get all they want to drink down there, she writes. Guess they'll never be able to enforce the law."

So she couldn't steer him away from talk of liquor! She would go back to signs, then.

"Look at that one, Pat!" she exclaimed; "the automobile with the girl driving it."

He veered about in an instant, all attention.

"A hummer!" he complimented. "Wonder if she's got any hooch under the seat?"

They had finished their coffee, and he, like Lefferts, had leaned back in comfort, puffing his Havana.

"I'm awfully warm," Lish suddenly said. "Would you mind if we went back to my place, Pat? The noise here—it's getting a bit on my nerves."

"Not getting the artistic temperament, are you, Lish?" he wanted to know. "Don't. It won't get you anywhere, or anything."

With which happy remark—almost the only personal thing he had uttered—they got into the elevator and descended to the sweltering street.

She pleaded neuralgia, and wouldn't let him finish his cigar on her geranium-lined paradise under the stars.

Lish had been a bridesmaid at the wedding of her friend, Caroline Bond, who had captured the romantic and popular young novelist, Roland Bruce. They had a book-lined apartment on Park Avenue, and as a rule Roland, being a so-called man of letters, went away to the country with his wife. But this year he had to finish a story of New York life in a hurry; the editors were waiting for the fifth installment, which had to be in the hands of the artist by August first. So he had remained in town to complete it.

The very next afternoon, having ac-

complished a satisfactory quarrel between his hero and heroine, and folding up his typewriter as the Arabs fold their tents, he thought how pleasant it would be to ring up Lish Gorman, and ask her to dine with him in the Park. A cool wind had come up, and he visualized the clambering vines, the velvet grass, the cool terrace hidden away in a mass of foliage. Moreover, he craved feminine society, and he missed his wife terribly. She wouldn't mind at all if he invited Lish to go with him on a harmless spree, and Lish would fit in with his mood. She could talk so intelligently about art, and even about books. Two workers in neighboring fields, they had much in common, and she might give him a good lead for his next chapter. Like Patrick, he never knew where an idea would spring from. He needed a fresh impetus. Of course Lish was just the person to give it to him.

"I'll be charmed," she told him over the telephone—just like the good little sport she was, Roland thought.

She couldn't help feeling that here was a man that would talk to her of something besides business and advertising, would wax personal, and make his spoken dialogue as fascinating as his written speech. He was beloved of young-girl readers because he certainly knew how to write a love scene, and his serials brought him fabulous prices. It was said that his work was contracted for long before he put a new ribbon in his typewriter.

Harlow didn't like it at all when he missed the opportunity three days in succession of dining with Lish. Never before had a summer been so busy for her, and he was a little bewildered, in his slow Southern way. He took heart somewhat when he discovered that Lish was not going about with one man, there where three who divided the honor of taking her out. But he didn't like it, not at all. He had got into the delight-



ful habit of strolling around and sitting with Lish late in the afternoon, and then, if she had nothing better to do, they always dined somewhere, or she even cooked a dainty meal for him, and they chatted until it was time for Harlow to go. He had come to be like one of the chairs around the studio—a living chaise longue, Lish called him, when his elongated body stretched itself out, and he drawled that he “was a desperate man, Lish.”

After Roland telephoned, Lish determined that she would get something new in honor of their dinner. She was going to have a heavenly time under the moon, to atone for the last two evenings. A harmless flirtation would be certain to take place; Caroline herself would be disappointed if her husband didn't come up to scratch, Lish thought.

Roland Bruce was a remarkably handsome young man, and his publishers, knowing the value of a cameolike profile of an author who looked exactly like his sentimental novels, always printed his picture with advertisements of his latest story. His dark eyes and olive skin, his thick, wavy hair and firm chin, his broad shoulders and manly bearing would have appealed to any woman, and his sales were augmented among shopgirls—there is no doubt of that—by the clever distribution of his photograph. Lish had always liked him, because she contended that so good-looking a man might easily have been conceited and utterly spoiled, but Roland went through life seemingly oblivious of the perfection of his features. He was domestic to the point of stupidity, and he wouldn't even let his fellow clubmen make an idol of him. He preferred the quiet of his own home, with Caroline, and, on occasion, a few intimate friends sitting around their table.

“If he's been working so hard this past week,” Lish thought, “he will be susceptible, like a lion released from a cage.” She brushed her hair with spe-

cial fervor, and she stood back from her glass to see the magical effect of the long, drooping moonstone earrings she had purchased that afternoon for almost nothing in a little shop on Fourth Avenue. Barbaric in their beauty, they lent a note of danger to her face, and she smiled at her reflection. If Harlow could see her now! And what of Roland, romanticist? Before those frozen bits of loveliness he would grovel, like a pilgrim before a shrine, and she knew that she could make herself look just like one of her own cover designs, by putting her elbows on the table, and holding her chin in the cup of her hands, and staring straight in front of her. Yes, she would do it to-night—she was desperate with these husbands! Why not be a vamp? How did their wives stand them? Was marriage just like this, just one damned meal after another? But Roland, being a writer, would not talk business, at any rate.

She couldn't help a glowing feeling of pride when he came for her—Roland Bruce, whom everybody recognized, and turned to stare at. Here he was, in her studio, alone, taking her out on a summer night that was unbelievably beautiful.

He kissed her hand, a great beginning, she thought. This would be an evening to record in her diary.

“But you look a little tired, Roland,” she said. “Maybe a cocktail would cheer you up. My stock of gin is still overflowing.” And she made him mix himself a drink.

“I don't need it, though, Lish. Your presence in itself is intoxicating.”

Where had she heard that line before? Ah, yes; she remembered now; it was the last sentence in one of the chapters of his serial, “Sounding Brass.” But then, hadn't every novelist since the beginning of time used it? Something went out of her at the recollection, but as one doesn't expect a singer to begin a concert on high C, so one mustn't

expect a caller to make every sentence a compliment.

He hadn't noticed the moonstones yet, but he would. Through the slight haze of a cocktail how they would shine and glimmer!

"I've written fourteen thousand words this week," Roland told her, when they were seated in the cool pavilion, and the waiter had taken their order. "The most I've ever done. And I'm so proud of myself, in this sticky weather. At fifteen cents a word you can see how that mounts up. I'll be able to take Caroline to Europe any time she wants to go now. My publishers tell me my sales increase, rather than diminish, in summer. Great, isn't it?"

She was listening intently, her elbows on the table, the moonstones dangling, like bits of bait to ensnare him. But he looked only at the tree beyond her, or at the table cover, where he perpetually drew queer designs with a pencil, as business men sometimes do when they are telephoning.

"One magazine wants to sign me up for ten years, but I don't think I'll do it," Roland went on, and the big circle, which a psychoanalyst would have said symbolized the almighty dollar in his mind, appeared on the cloth as he spoke. "I'd rather do my own work in my own way, without restrictions. One has to keep up his ideals, you know."

"Yes," she said, very low, leaning forward, all her femininity bubbling to the surface; all the concentrated womanly energy of the ages crushed into that one word.

"And if a man keeps on, doing his best, he is bound to succeed. Each novel I write goes bigger than the last, and it ought to keep up."

"Isn't that wonderful?" Lish offered, but he evidently didn't hear her.

"And they say it will be that way for years. So why should I worry about binding contracts?"

"Why, indeed?" She leaned forward even farther, but at that moment the iced consommé was brought on, and, unromantically enough, Roland tucked his napkin in his waistcoat, lifted his cup, and began to drink.

"I suppose you like to study types, Roland; get people out alone, like this, so that you can put them into your stories?" Lish said.

"Oh, I don't know. My writing comes naturally to me. It's a gift, I suppose. Caroline helps me a lot. She tells me about all the men who come to tea and make eyes at her. We don't mind the money we spend on liquor, because of the dandy material those fellows supply."

So this was successful authorship!

"My movie rights alone——" he began.

"But why don't you look for copy yourself, when you have the chance?" she interrupted him. "Here am I, corking material for a love scene, right in front of you, like an artist's model." A gentle reminder that she, too, could do something. "Why don't you put me in a story, and then let me illustrate it?"

She could have bitten her tongue off the moment she made that last suggestion. That was one reason she was so eager to come out to dinner with him, she knew passed through his mind.

"My publishers attend to the illustrations. I have nothing to do with them, Lish, as you ought to know." Ice was in his tone. Mechanically he went on drinking his soup.

"Of course you realize that—that I never meant what I said," Lish tried to explain.

"That's all right, little girl." She could have slapped him for that. "I'll overlook it."

"It seems to me that you overlook everything," she flamed. He was no better than the others, and they were mere business men. What was he? she'd

like to know. And two years ago he had been so unspoiled, so wonderful. Is this what money did to people?

"Just what do you mean?" he inquired calmly.

"Why, you're overlooking—me!" she cried. "If you're as romantic as you try to make out in your novels, why don't you flirt with me? I'm pretty, am I not?"

He burst out laughing.

"Very," he admitted. "But you're—why, you're Caroline's friend, her very best friend, I always thought. Surely you wouldn't jeopardize the relation of years for a mere summer flirtation with her husband? And that's all it would be, I assure you, Lish."

"I'm not so sure it would be even that! All you men are so confoundedly proper and stupid!"

"All we men?" Roland repeated. "So you've had lots of experience, little girl?"

"Yes, with the heaviest lot of drummers I've ever run up against!" she flamed. It was cumulative, three nights in succession had been too much for her. "I wish I could meet a real *man*, who talked of something besides himself and his wife, and his darned business!" Tears almost came to her eyes.

"You need a vacation, little girl!"

"A flirtation, you mean! And please don't call me 'little girl.' I'm more grown up than you silly men!"

Roland stared at her. Had the heat gone to her head? What a vixen she was on this delectable summer night, and he had thought he was going to have such a nice, quiet time!

"You must go away, lit—Lish," he said. "You——"

"I certainly intend to, and right now!" she told him. "Here I give up a wonderful evening to the husband of my best friend, and he sits and talks of nothing but himself, how many piffling words he's put on paper, how much he gets for each word, and expects me

to be interested! What do you think I'm made of, anyhow? If that's all you've got to say, why don't you go out with another man, who'll pay for his own dinner, and maybe all the taxi? Why do you take girls out, anyhow?"

"Why, Lish! How you rant on! What's come over you?"

"Common sense, if you want to know!" she swiftly answered. "Why don't you put some insincere compliments into your dialogue? They'd be better than stony business. I wouldn't believe you, I wouldn't take you seriously, but how you can expect to be a romantic novelist, and have your work *live* when you know so little about women, is more than I can understand! Are you made of putty, Roland Bruce? So you let your own wife get most of your material, do you? Ha! A nice way to get results—vicariously! If an artist has a model, why shouldn't a writer? Tell me that! At least painters can flirt, and flirt delightfully! If I were married to a man like you, I'd tell you to go out just once in so often and throw all my cards on the table, with some pretty girl. You'd write just that much better, and I'd know you weren't disintegrating as an artist and a man!"

"What would Caroline think if she heard you, Lish?"

"Oh, bother Caroline, and all this silly friendship stuff, Roland! Don't think I'm asking you to squeeze my hand, but I'd like you a hundred times better if you did. I have no wild emotions, I assure you! I do hate codfish, though, and think of having one for breakfast every day in the year! I'm going. I'm bored to death. I've been bored to death three nights running, now, and I see no reason why I should put myself out to be a sister to my friends' husbands while they're gallivanting off at the mountains or the seashore."

She raised her hands to her ears, and

snatched off the moonstones. She banged them down on the table.

"Here, I want you to have these, and look at them some day. They're a symbol of a deadness that has crept into American life. They're almost Anglo-Saxon in their pathetic chilliness. They're also a symbol of a girl's foolishness, for I bought them to entrap you for fun, to-night. I might as well have tried to ensnare a snail, Roland!"

She rose, and there was a glitter in her eyes which he could not mistake.

"Get me a taxi. I'm going home—alone."

He got up, too. Fortunately, there was no one sitting near them, and what she had said could not be overheard.

"You don't mean it," he cried. "If you wish to go, I'll take you."

"Oh, no, you won't! I couldn't stand the strain. *Get me a taxi!*" she repeated, every word ringing out.

He obeyed. And he remained, because she made him do so.

Harlow was sitting on the tiny roof garden when she got home. The janitor always let him in. He had no place else to go, he told her. He had made himself a gin rickey from the case he had given her, and was leaning back smoking his pipe when she came in. He couldn't believe his eyes when she stood in the French window that led to where he sat.

"I'm glad you're here," was all she said. "Want some cold meat and salad? I've had no dinner."

"You haven't?" he cried, rising. "Neither have I; sort of thought you might come home early—like the other times."

"I'll set the table under the umbrella."

She did. They never had a better, cozier time together.

"Do you like the city, Harlow?" she asked him, apropos of nothing, as they munched their chicken.

"I love it!" he cried, looking off at the ribbon of the river that wound like a silver serpent to the ocean. "Why people skip away from it, even in the summer, I can't see."

He pointed down at the street directly beneath them. "Gosh! Look at that long lane of lights, like a necklace. And those moonstones drooping from the ears of the lamp-posts."

"Moonstones! Earrings!" Lish cried.

"Yes. What's the matter, Lish?"

"Nothing," she smiled. "Only, I wonder if they ever come off."

He thought she had gone suddenly mad—moon-mad. But her sanity seemed to come back when he heard her saying:

"Do you know, you're not so bad, after all, Harlow. You've got something of the poet in you. You make me wild, sometimes, but on the whole I guess I might do worse. Most men are such colossal bores!"

He looked at her in amazement, a joy he had never experienced before in his heart.

"Why, Lish, do you really mean it?" he drawled. He got up, went around to her, grasped her firmly, and kissed her.

"You old goosey!" she laughed. "I guess you've got me for life now!"

The next morning Roland Bruce called Lish up on the wire.

"I hope you're feeling better, lit—I mean Lish. But I understand," he had the audacity to add. "And say, you gave me a good idea for a corking short story last night."

"I'm glad you got something out of it, anyhow," she flashed back at him.

"I got something far better."

"What?" he asked.

"A husband—a summer husband, at that. But his wife will never leave him in the city in July; he might flirt with another girl!"



# Jilted

By

Rebecca Hooper Eastman

Author of "The Man Trap," "The Lonely  
Mr. Lord," etc.

IT is all very well to map out a scheme for your life, and bend all your energies to make that scheme successful, providing you take one essential precaution. You must have several subsidiary schemes to fall back on when the first one fails. Having put all his eggs in one basket, Horace Brothers was suffering the painful consequences. Yet Horace's initial scheme was so unselfish that you would almost have said that he was justified in supposing that his life would flow along the channels into which he had turned it.

Because Horace's father and mother and sister had been better able to spend money than save or make it, Horace, who had the reverse temperament, had early made it his business to provide his extravagant family with an inexhaustible supply. Money, which meant nothing to Horace in the abstract, appealed to his family only as the medium with which to purchase charming things which Horace hadn't even the wit to select. The Brothers family spent Horace's money with an infinite grace; they weren't vulgar with it, but they displayed positive genius in keeping it in circulation.

It happened that Horace was maturing at the time when automobiles were being perfected, that he had a craze for machinery, and that after years of plodding, he had patented a device now used by nearly every car on the market. Consequently, he had

been able to retire at an age when other men were squaring their shoulders and grimly saying "Now or never!" And when he had settled down to the joy of watching his family spend his millions, they all three up and died the same year.

Outsiders, who had been less patient than Horace with the exorbitant ways of his family, said it seemed as if the three spenders had died just on purpose to annoy Horace. Anyway, they were dead, and they had left him with all their expensive belongings, an atmosphere which he couldn't live up to, and an intense, outraged loneliness.

It had taken Horace nearly a year to dispose of the various vanities and properties he had no use for. He had sold the Fifth Avenue house at the time values were most inflated, and now there remained on his hands only the largest of the three country houses. Until he was rid of that, he wouldn't feel free to start his life afresh. He had therefore run up from town to break the news to the servants retained in the house that their life of idle ease, in so far as it was connected with him, had come to an end. As he had been driven up to the great show place the previous evening, he had felt absolutely bashful before it. For except in matters pertaining directly to his business, Horace was painfully shy. In fact, he was secretly elated when he heard that people thought he had lost his money, just because he was selling everything he

owned. His lack of social graces and his supposedly evaporating fortune successfully protected him from designing ladies. And just as soon as this last estate was sold and the papers were signed, Horace would begin life all over again.

There were actually days when Horace Brothers seriously contemplated going to work as a car conductor on a rural trolley line, where everybody that got on said "Good morning." It would be a friendly, human sort of job. When traveling on such a line, he had once seen a woman rush out of a farmhouse, hail the car, and present the conductor and motorman with fresh hot doughnuts, doughnuts which had made Horace's mouth water.

On other days Horace had a leaning toward some sort of a small shop in a little place where everybody called you by your first name, and you all belonged to one large, interesting family. He felt an incongruous yearning to tie up a yard of calico and a pound of tea and some nails in one package, and offer the customer a free piece of cheese from the end of an immense knife.

Semioccasionally, Horace wondered if it was too late for him to learn to be a cobbler. That would be best of all! While he was puttering over people's old shoes, he could find out where help was most needed, and could do good by stealth.

Meantime, Horace Brothers, the misfit millionaire, was sitting helplessly in the housekeeper's room, with three neat servants lined up ominously before him.

"Ahem, Katy," began Horace, as a preliminary to discharging the waitress.

"What time would you like your luncheon, Mr. Horace?" interrupted the cook.

"The early peas is elegant," remarked the chambermaid.

They were three against one, and they didn't intend to be fired if they

could help it. They knew Mr. Horace of old.

"Make me something *very* nice and serve it on the west veranda," said Horace. He wouldn't be caught eating in that big dining hall alone, again. After lunch, just before train time, he would discharge them. There was no point in upsetting everybody, including himself, so early in the day. "I'll take a walk until lunch," he finished.

"Courtland would like to drive you," suggested the chambermaid. "Excepting for the station wagon, not one of them cars has been out of the garage!"

"I am going to take a *walk*!"

One of the many disadvantages of having it known that you were rich was the fact that nobody ever wanted to let you walk a step. Fearing the maids would insist on his riding, Horace rushed out of the housekeeper's room, through the halls, grabbed his hat from the refectory table, jerked open the front door, and almost ran down a girl who had just stretched out a timid hand in the direction of his doorbell.

The girl had wide-open, astonished eyes about the color of bluish-purple pansies, and he who once looked squarely into them, as Horace was doing, would never be quite the same again. Most people, however, wouldn't have bothered to look at the girl's eyes at all, because her clothes, though passable, had reached the stage when things are usually passed on to the Salvation Army. Horace was fascinated with the combination of those perfect eyes and poverty. Under her unfashionable hat she had plentiful brown hair, and her sweet young mouth was a poem. A small blue vein crossed the bridge of her nose most effectively.

"I'd like to see your rooms, please!"

As she voiced her extraordinary request, Horace noted with joy that she trembled. Other women had been smilingly superior when they hadn't snubbed him.



"My rooms?" echoed Horace. Although he tried to make his voice gentle, it was roughened with surprise.

"Mr. Joslin, at the Ivy Inn across the street, if you call such a wide place a street, suggested that I might get rooms here. We couldn't afford the hotel rooms, and I do hope that your prices are more reasonable."

Each word was a manifest effort, for she was even shyer than Horace.

"How many in party?" inquired Horace, with a mighty effort to resemble a profiteer. In his search for a new career, with close human contacts, he hadn't exactly thought of keeping boarders, but why not?

"Aunt Lulu, mother, Uncle Ben, and Kitty-cat. Mother has nervous prostration, Aunt Lulu is partly paralyzed, and Uncle Ben has a brand-new kind of palsy. He exhibits at medical conventions."

"And Kitty-cat?" From what he had seen of women, Horace knew that they were capable of annexing anything from a crocodile to a zebra, and coyly calling it Kitty-cat.

"Is just a regular kitten. There were three, and Uncle Ben named them Parlor, Bedroom, and Bath. Parlor and Bedroom died, and since then we've called Bath\*plain Kitty-cat."

She paused, evidently embarrassed at having to bring up the subject of rooms again.

"And you wanted to see my rooms?" Horace tried the effect of rubbing his hands together as innkeepers do in operas. Never had he felt so much at ease with a girl.

"When a thousand dollars was a thousand dollars, we were all right. Now that it isn't, we have to debate about everything. We heard that the Ivy Inn was a moderate-priced place, but as they want six a day apiece, we're just going to eat there, if we can find cheap rooms. I'm afraid, by the looks, that yours aren't cheap, so if you'll just let me sit

down a minute, I won't detain you." She hobbled to a chair. "I'm not lame," she explained, "but I have been standing so long in one position that my right foot is asleep. Because I'm such a coward, it took me a long time to get up my courage to ring your bell. My foot was already asleep when you yanked open the door."

She sat demurely, with her eyes cast down, and occasionally stamped her foot.

As he surveyed her, Horace recalled the fact that farther down the road, just outside his walls, there was a small cottage in which there lived a Mrs. Fuller, who, occasionally, if approached with tact, "took" people. The girl had mistaken the Brothers estate for the Fuller cottage, which was hidden in vines, and inconspicuous. Brothers wondered if it would help with his deception, if he put a pencil behind his ear.

"I tell you," he began confidentially, "I've been paid in advance for my rooms by an eccentric old gentleman who has changed his plans, but who insists on my keeping his money, because it's so late in the season he was afraid I couldn't rent them again. They're paid for, anyway, so if you want them at a nominal rate, say a dollar apiece a week, it'll be all right."

She followed him upstairs eagerly enough, but evidently the size of the place oppressed her.

"I didn't suppose there was such a big house in the world!" she said diffidently. "How many bedrooms?"

"Thirty-five or forty."

She sank down on a chaise longue and burst out crying.

"Don't do that!" besought Horace uncomfortably.

"Won't you please let me cry?"

"Certainly, go ahead, if you're enjoying yourself. I only wondered why thirty-five or forty bedrooms made you cry."

"I'm crying with relief. Everything nowadays is so cramped and horrid, and mean and stingy that seeing forty bedrooms and dressing rooms and baths all at once is more than I can stand. When I started to ring your bell, I had just about given up. We were so comfortable in town, until Uncle Ben, who sends for every catalogue advertised, got interested in summer-resort booklets, and they all read of mountain vistas, zephyrs, spring water, and refined cuisines until I had to take them away. By the time I got them all packed up and into a taxi, I was so tired I hated them. They're over at the inn, having lunch, and they care so much about what they eat that I simply couldn't sit still and hear them gloat over the menu. At home, the minute we finish lunch, they all want to know what we're going to have for dinner. I just told them we probably couldn't afford to stay, and then I come over here, and you offer me forty bedrooms! Do you wonder that I wept? Now that I have complained to you, a total stranger, about my family, I shall probably inherit prostration, palsy, and paralysis."

The rapid flow of words had so eased the strain that it was apparent that the storm had passed its zenith.

"Suppose we plan where we'll put them," said Horace. "Let's give your mother the largest guest room. Aunt Lulu and Uncle Ben will enjoy the ivory-and-blue suite with the twin beds."

"Excuse me!"

He turned and found her blushing furiously.

"What's the matter *now*?"

"They're not married and never have been."

"I had no idea I was being so improper. We'll take down the extra bed, and put Uncle Ben in the bachelor's quarters where he belongs. You shall have this little Louis Something suite which has always been sacred to popular débutantes."

Horace's lodger walked up to a long French mirror and surveyed herself.

"I never saw such rude mirrors!" she observed. "I believe they like to make my clothes look shabby." And then, with sudden dignity, "As long as I've decided to hire your rooms, I wish you'd come over to the inn and meet my family."

Humbly, Horace escorted her down the drive under the buttonwood trees, across the wide street with its double avenues of oaks to the smart little inn which nestled under Revolutionary elms. In the dining room he was presented to three spoiled children. Mrs. Elliot's nerves hadn't marred her faded beauty, Uncle Ben Eliot shook only a little, and Aunt Lulu Bostwick looked like a retired royalty much given over to veils and feather boas. By and large, as groups of relatives go, they were far from unrepresentable. They bowed condescendingly to Horace, and entirely forgot to ask June—good heavens, her name was June!—if she cared for any lunch.

Fifteen minutes later a slow-moving procession led by bell boys and baggage, with Kitty-cat following in the extreme rear, toiled up Horace's drive. Aunt Lulu told Horace superiorly that his rooms were very nice, and Uncle Ben's delight at being isolated from his feminine relatives was touching.

"I'm so used to going round with a gang of women that some day I'm afraid I'll forget and put on petticoats," he said to Horace, as he stretched out for a smoke and a siesta.

As soon as every one was settled, Horace went in search of June.

"Are you too proud to come down and eat lunch with your landlord?" he asked.

"I'd simply love it!"

She had taken off her hat and slipped into a white frock.

"Then come down when you hear the gong."

And Horace rushed to the kitchen.

"My friends have come!" he announced. "I didn't expect them until next week, but they're here, and isn't it nice? They'll eat at the inn, except when I feel like celebrating or something. They've all had their lunch except Miss Elliot, and she'll eat with me as soon as you're ready. I'm starved, remember."

Katy looked at him apologetically.

"To think how I misjudged you, Mr. Horace! You were only trying to break the news that you were going to have company!"

"It's all ready, Katy; sound the gong!" said Ellen, with a beaming smile at the source of her large salary.

At the sound of the Chinese temple bells, June came slowly down, peering at Horace over the head of her nestling kitten.

"You're a maid of a thousand moods!" he commented, when he found her deliciously gay, and ready to laugh at anything even faintly humorous.

It was a delightful luncheon. Kitty-cat rubbed sociably back and forth against their ankles, and the assiduous Katy trod on her only three times. At dessert, however, came Mr. Joslin, to servilely explain that he hadn't understood that Miss Elliot was a friend of the Brothers family, and to offer to send meals over on rainy days, and generally be slave of June's lamp.

"I'm glad you approve of my landlord," remarked June seriously.

"Landlord?" repeated the astonished Mr. Joslin. Then he chuckled politely. "That is a joke, calling Mr. Brothers, the richest man in the State, your landlord."

"But he is, aren't you?" June turned to Horace.

"I'm anything you want me to be!" he remarked gallantly, as Mr. Joslin, with another polite chuckle, obsequiously withdrew.

"Are you what he just said?" asked June.

"I'm afraid I am. I didn't plan very well. It didn't occur to me that Joslin would hustle right over. You'll stay, just the same, won't you? Joslin thinks we are old friends and so do the maids. Can't you explain to your family that I'm an old friend, and that the landlord part of it was just a joke?"

"The family isn't imbecile, and they would have heard of you."

"Couldn't we have met somewhere, often, and yet you never thought to mention it at home?"

When shy people finally get going, there is no stopping them.

"We couldn't have met anywhere except at Sunday school, where I have the infant class."

"Mightn't I have addressed the infants, please?"

June rose from the table.

"Something peculiar has happened to me!" she remarked soberly, though there was in the depths of her eyes an elfin gleam. "This morning I couldn't possibly have lied to my family about anything, whereas this afternoon, I'm quite in the mood to fib. I suppose I'm going to the dogs—I feel so gay and irresponsible."

"That's exactly the way you ought to feel at your age. Just how old are you? I know you are still young enough to tell."

"I'm just exactly twenty."

"Not to-day?"

"I have only one birthday a year, and it's to-day."

"Bless me, what did you get?"

"The family were so busy thinking about the Ivy Inn that they forgot." She sighed with a kind of happy resignation. "I didn't remind them, because it takes all the starch out of a birthday if people have to be nagged. Though I did say, on the train, 'It's somebody's birthday, but I've forgotten whose.' Even then they didn't remember. Oh

dear, I wish you weren't so hideously rich. I had begun to feel quite at home with you. Every time I think of your wealth, I'm going to be frightened."

"Then don't think of it. I don't. Come see my library. I never noticed it much because it was picked out for me, but I'm told there are books there to beguile a lifetime of rainy days."

"I don't like books," said June.

"Why?"

"The happy endings make me so blue. Life isn't like that, you know. People don't get what they deserve, except in books, and the more happy endings I read, the madder I get. If you only knew the contents of all these shelves, and could give me an armful of stories with gruesome, gory endings, I know they'd cheer me up. You see I have to read sentimental romances aloud to Aunt Lulu every day from half past three till dinner, and the happier and more improbable the ending the better she likes it. Which reminds me, it is half past three now, and they'll be expecting me."

"I have a car and a chauffeur who complains of his idle life. Let him take your invalids for a long ride while you and I plan a birthday celebration and ride horseback. What's the matter, don't your charges like motoring? It's a limousine."

"Yes, but——"

"But what, Miss Elliot? What is it now?"

"People used to say they felt things in their bones. Now they say that they have a hunch. And I've got a hunch, Mr. Brothers, that there's a mistake, somewhere. Somehow your very kindness is beginning to make me uncomfortable. This hunch of mine tells me we can't go on staying in your house. I can't ask mother about it because she thinks the world ought to treat us just exactly as you are treating us. It's part of her prostration. When our few rich friends come to call, she embarrasses

me frightfully with her hints. Here we are now, in a house with forty bedrooms, imposing on a total stranger, and behaving as if we were guests that he had implored to visit him. It just can't go on! I don't want to be rude, but I've got to be honest, and it seems to me that there must be something a little queer about you to have taken us in, even though you did it in the kindest way."

They were standing before the fireplace in the great library, and the door having blown shut, they were quite by themselves.

"Sit down," said Horace gently.

After an appraising look at him, she seated herself primly in the far end of a davenport. Very seriously he sat down in the remote other end. She was beginning to be afraid, again, and he must go carefully. He must stick to facts, too; nothing else would satisfy her. And the facts were so unconvincing. How could he explain that he had subordinated his life so completely to his family that now, without them, he was utterly adrift? Would she understand him if he said that only the fact that she wore old clothes had opened his doors to her? He *was* queer, he was downright queer.

"I'm glad you had that hunch," he said gravely. "It makes me respect you more than ever." Respect was evidently the right word, for she became a trifle less taut. "If at this stage, you hadn't thought of going, I should have continued to like you, but I should have thought you rather too simple-minded to be as interesting as you are proving yourself. If you accepted everything I offered, without questioning, I should have decided, in spite of your being the successful impresario of three invalids, that you were a sponge."

"Then you are reconciled to my going? I needn't explain any more?"

"Just a minute! I want to tell you just why it will be a great favor to me,

if you'll spend the summer here. Nobody needs or wants me, at all. Lots of people could use my money, but I'm human enough to want it used in my own way. I'm not going to be selfish with it, but neither am I going to let anybody else have the fun of placing it where it will do the most good. I thought that if I could disappear and become an obscure sort of person, I could find lots of real people, who needed real boosts, and that I could do some boosting without their finding me out. Now you've come along, and I have a hunch, myself. I have a hunch that we can be friends. I've never really played, in all my life, and I'd like to play all summer. You are my first real adventure, and you came when I needed you most. Do you feel more comfortable, now that you know? I'm only thirty-nine, and that's not too old to have all sorts of interesting hopes. When I met you on my doorstep this morning, I was on my way to the public library to see if there were any books of advice for misfit millionaires. If there are many more like me, something ought to be done about us!" he finished jocosely.

"I suppose I ought to tell you something about myself," she said.

"I like the topic."

"On second thought, it would sound conceited."

"Well, you're going to stay?"

"I'll stay a while."

"Then run upstairs and tell your charges that Courtland will be around in ten minutes with the car. Don't forget to say I'm not running a lodging or rooming house, because they'll make breaks if we don't tell them. Just say that I'm interested in your Sunday school. And *that's* no distortion of the truth, because just at present I'm interested in everything concerning you."

"Just at *present*?"

"If you begin to jolly me, I shall turn to putty."

She walked to the library door, and then faced him suddenly.

"Though I don't believe in happy endings, I am obliged to admit that there are sometimes gorgeous interludes."

It was not necessary for June to perjure her soul to her invalids. Being old, they knew that it isn't always well to inquire into the whys and wherefores. June was abundantly chaperoned. If delightful incidents would happen, why, let them happen! And they drove away in Horace's limousine with the complacent smiles of those who at last receive their just due.

"I do hope," said Uncle Ben, as they glided down the drive, "that June isn't in love with that omnipresent Alonzo Greene back home. He's entirely too solicitous about my health."

After June's first riding lesson, in a habit which Katy had produced from the storeroom, Brothers left her to enjoy an outdoor swimming pool in a bathing suit which Katy had also unearthed, and darted off in a roadster to the nearest large town in search of proper ingredients for a real birthday party. For many years he had watched his family shop, but this was the first time he had ever gone shopping on his own initiative. He found it surprisingly good fun. After much delightful vacillation he selected a frothy, hand-made pink parasol, five pounds of candy in a painted satin box, an exquisite ostrich feather fan of green, a rainbow-silk scarf, and an armful of American Beauty roses. These, with a gallon of mousse, and ten live lobsters, quite filled the car.

"Silly, crazy, risky fool!" he admonished himself jovially, as he turned toward home. It was the first time he had ever been foolish and he liked the sensation. "I had no idea idiocy was so restful," he told himself. "You are in your dotage at thirty-nine, Horace, my boy! You're undignified, you're—"

And then he would recall June's eyes

and the ripple of her laughter, and he would grit his teeth and tell himself that this was the first time in his life he had ever been truly wise. He had seriously contemplated being a cobbler, a conductor, and a shopkeeper. He was queer, and always had been, so why not abandon himself to the most logical and convenient queerness? Nevertheless, his sober, methodical side kept reminding him that he had known June only five hours, and that he, who never took any one on trust, had accepted her without questioning. He, who loathed felines, had even accepted Kitty-cat.

Because of his mixed emotions, Horace enjoyed the ride home better than he had ever enjoyed a ride in his life. June had not returned to the land of dreams, but sat on the top step watching for him. When she saw the mysterious packages, she put her hands over her eyes and promised not to peek. She was adorably sure they were all for her.

The party, which occurred precisely at nine, was a hilarious affair. During their afternoon drive, her family had remembered, and they had bought her some "useful" gifts over which she made a tremendous fuss. She trailed up and down with Horace's sumptuous green feather fan in one hand, and Uncle Ben's box of writing paper in the other. Then she paraded with Horace's pink parasol, and Aunt Lulu's plain everyday handkerchiefs, and finally with Horace's rainbow scarf and the pair of plain black silk stockings from her mother. Even at the supreme moment when Katy brought in a birthday cake on which Ellen had lavished all the arts of her profession, June never lost her poise. Later, after she had tucked her three blissfully beaming invalids in bed and given them their pills and tonics, she ran downstairs to thank Horace, and say good night.

"It's only eleven," said Horace. "Your birthday won't be over until twelve."

"I've been so unspeakably bold, I suppose I may as well complete the day." And she followed him outdoors and sat down in a wicker chair by a fountain. Horace lounged in another chair close by, and lit his favorite pipe.

"Talk," he said unsteadily. "When you are quiet, I am afraid that I have dreamed you."

Instead of laughing at his eloquence, she took him seriously. Horace liked being taken seriously, especially in moonlight by a girl.

"I haven't a place to carry your fan, but I like it all the better because I didn't need it. I like the scarf and the parasol for the same reason. And I shall bless Uncle Ben forever for having made me take them all out of town. Would it bore you if I told you about our home?"

"No."

"The neighborhood has changed."

"You mean that it has deteriorated?"

"Yes. Foreigners have moved in where our friends used to live, and on summer nights the din is terrific. Last night at this time I was hearing wild bits of 'Pagliacci,' the mad scene from 'Lucia,' the quartet from 'Rigoletto,' the prison scene from 'Trovatore,' and jazz all at once. This was accompanied by babies who cried because they couldn't sleep in the noise, and the conversation of about fifty Cuban cigar-makers who were all talking on the sidewalk of a Spanish rooming house opposite. Worst of all were the bow-legged little children, whose parents didn't know enough to put them to bed. The later it got, the louder they shouted, and the harder they played. The house belongs to Aunt Lulu, and she won't sell or rent on account of the associations. Sometimes I wish associations could be abolished!"

Although it wasn't in the least warm, she unfurled the green feather fan, which had turned gray in the moonlight, and waved it slowly.



"Can't this be something more than an interlude?" asked Horace. It wasn't true that they hadn't met until that day; he could no longer believe it.

"It's only an interlude," she insisted.

"Since interludes are proverbially short, may I begin to say June, and could you possibly call me by my cumbersome first name?"

She held out a slim hand.

"Thank you, Horace, for my party."

She said it with a grace and dignity which charmed him more than ever.

"Thank you, June, for stepping down from heaven to my doorstep!"

"Beware!"

"Beware what?"

"Sentimental speeches."

"I don't know how to make 'em."

After two idyllic weeks during which the limousine was nursemaid, who should appear, like a black cloud on the horizon, but Mr. Alonzo Greene? June's first little speech about telling Horace something concerning herself hadn't suggested a suitor, as it should have done. Consequently Horace was unprepared for Alonzo Greene.

Alonzo Greene wore natty clothes, he was taller in Uncle Ben's bank, he was tall and spare and dark, and his head wasn't nearly thick enough through, from back to front. When you saw him head on, through the teller's window, as June had, he was fairly good looking, but you had to like him awfully well to forgive his profile. No sort of inducement would make a certain little clump of hair toward the back of his head lie down. Horace, naturally prejudiced against him, thought that Alonzo Greene looked as if his hands were clammy. No matter what your sentiments were about Alonzo Greene, you were forced to acknowledge that he had a powerful personality. You couldn't take him lightly. Alonzo Greene was not only cocksure of himself, but he looked as if he had it "on" every one with whom he came in contact.

Alonzo Greene took a room down at Mrs. Fuller's, he ate at the inn, but he lived at Horace's. Bit by bit disconcerting facts leaked out. He was superintendent of June's Sunday school. He took June to the theater once a week. Worst of all, and this was the meaning of all the talk about "interludes," Alonzo Greene had made up his mind to marry June as soon as one of her invalids passed on. Which probably accounted for Uncle Ben's dislike of his solicitude.

It is curious how unimportant people are sometimes able to cow their superiors. In Alonzo Greene's presence, June became curiously repressed, and Horace overpowered. The three invalids were respectful to Alonzo; every one had a feeling that if Alonzo wasn't handled carefully, he would come out with a horrible speech which would spoil everything.

When Horace, by skillful maneuvers, got June once or twice to himself she admitted that although she might not have selected Alonzo as a husband, she would none the less marry him some day. He had been so kind! Most men she knew were afraid of her on account of her encumbering invalids. She knew. She had once overheard a most unfortunate conversation when a lot of the men were trimming the church for Christmas, and hadn't known that she had dropped in to leave a package of gifts for the little tots in her class to find under the Sunday-school Christmas tree. Alonzo had been big and fine about two invalids. She had accepted him out of gratitude perhaps. Anyway, he was accepted.

"I want you to know that your three invalids don't frighten me at all," said Horace. They were whispering alone in the garden at midnight, and they were nervous because Alonzo Greene had a habit of popping in at any time. "I want a new career," continued Hor-

ace. "I'd marry you and all three, this minute, gladly, if you'd let me."

"Throwing over Alonzo would be treating him the way other men treat me on account of the invalids. I must give Alonzo his due. In fact he told me that if he had your money, he wouldn't care if there were invalids ad libitum."

"Marry me, June."

"I promised Alonzo. You may not realize what I mean, but there is something inevitable about Alonzo, to me. Even if I tried to marry you, he would somehow get me away."

"You don't love the unspeakable man!"

She would neither affirm nor deny it.

Because Horace was inexperienced with girls and their ways, he took June and her remarks seriously. She was serious, as serious as she could be, but she didn't want Horace to take her seriously. That was why she argued so hard that she must stick to Alonzo. She wanted to rouse the cave-man instinct in Horace. She wanted to hear him declare that he would lock her up in the summer house and keep her there in that frail prison until Alonzo left town. Perhaps what June desired most of all was that Horace should seize her bodily, thrust her into a car, and drive like mad until they found a minister who would marry them. June wanted Horace to get rid of Alonzo for her, and Horace couldn't seem to understand. It finally ended by Horace's taking her at her word, and doing the last thing she had foreseen—namely, departing without even a good-by, and leaving a note to say that she could stay through August, but that he was going to put the place on the market September first.

Alonzo, who hadn't hoped to get rid of Brothers without a scene, was jubilant. He was surer than ever that he had a dominating personality. He told June, who was ready to pack up and

go back to town, that she must by all means stay the allotted time.

As it happened, however, June didn't stay on in the house with forty bedrooms and dressing rooms and baths. The very next night after Horace departed, and June went into the library to remind Uncle Ben that it was bedtime, she found him strangely still. When she touched him she knew that his long sentence of ill health was over.

While she stood abashed before him, ashamed that she had ever rebelled a moment over something he couldn't help, Alonzo came in search of her, and all of a sudden June found herself being managed with Alonzo's proverbial efficiency. As Alonzo went about busily attending to all the arrangements for getting them back home, and telegraphed directions about the funeral, it seemed to June that he derived a faint pleasure from the mortuary ceremonies. His black tie was too large, and his new black-kid gloves dominated the landscape. He was conspicuous on the train, and had everybody wondering.

The night after the funeral, Alonzo stayed to dinner without being asked, and afterward, while he sat glancing over the paper, June ran up to her room and locked the door. When Alonzo put down that paper, he would ask her to name the date. There was no possibility of escape—unless she refused him. And her conscience wouldn't let her do that. She had accepted too much!

Nevertheless, instead of going down to get it over quickly, she made sure that her door was securely locked and then took from the depths of a shabby trunk a frothy hand-made pink parasol, a fan of green ostrich feathers, a rainbow scarf, and a silken bag of faded rose leaves.

"June!"

Alonzo had finished his newspaper and was calling her, quietly, as befitted a house of mourning, but with the insistence of one who had inalienable

rights. June put down the finery, unlocked the door, and went and stood at the head of the stairs.

"I can't come down to-night," she said. There was in her refusal a note of pleading which was involuntary, and from which she recoiled. "I have such a blinding headache, Alonzo, that I'm going straight to bed."

"A headache?" His incredulous, barely tolerant tones implied that after all he had done, she ought to come down and be proposed to, headache and all. "I'll be down to-morrow night," he announced, after a threatening pause.

When she heard him slam the door vindictively, June shivered with relief. Although the next night would surely bring him, she had gained twenty-four whole hours of freedom. Then, suddenly through her relief the noise of the street broke on her ears afresh. The blare of the phonographs, the wails of the tea-and-coffee-fed babies, and the Spanish chorus jeered at her and reminded her that she hadn't the courage or the conscience to send Alonzo packing. The noise shrieked at her and pounded her ears until at last, in spite of the August heat, she closed her windows.

The instant she did so, Alonzo faded away and became so unreal that she picked up the parasol and imagined that she was strolling in Horace's garden. After one or two collisions with the old-fashioned chandelier, she put the parasol away from the city grime and cinders, and took up the green feather fan. There was in the closet an old summer silk from which she could cut the neck and sleeves and thus make an extemporized evening gown. After fifteen minutes of rapid ripping and pinning, she glanced at her reflection in the mirror and knew that she had never before looked so lovely. Armed with the rainbow scarf and the fan, she ran downstairs to the long front parlor

whose mirrors again assured her she was glorious.

Oblivious of the fact that she had forgotten to pull down the shades, and without the least suspicion that Alonzo stood over the way staring at her house, that part of June which Alonzo would never win, though he married her a thousand times, paraded up and down an imaginary house which bore a striking resemblance to Horace's. An ominous peal of the old-fashioned doorbell sent Alonzo's June cowering in the corner.

After a perceptible interval, the colored maid lumbered up the basement stairs and admitted Alonzo, who strode into the room with such angry eyes that at first June cringed before him.

So this was the sort of headaches she had!

Very likely she was expecting *him!* Meaning Brothers.

These two exclamations were the texts of Alonzo's wrath. He preached for half an hour. After the first start of surprise, however, away off in some remote corner of her being, June found herself, although her face was serious, laughing deliciously, with a sense of intoxicating freedom. She had never seen Alonzo lose his temper before, and instead of becoming more formidable, he had turned ludicrous. It takes a big nature to put across righteous, convincing wrath, and poor Alonzo's anger undid all the effect of his faithful devotion. At length, after loud, ineffective indictments, Alonzo paused, glared in silence, and announced that he was through with June forever. As he had banged the front door as hard as possible, the first time he went out, this second slamming hardly registered.

"Jilted!" whispered June to herself at last. "Jilted, you lucky mortal!"

She sat still on the little satin sofa, and waved the green feather fan. It was the badge of her deliverance. It had saved her. She hugged it up

against her breast. Had Horace really had time to get started on one of the lowly careers? Or had he departed, as rejected lovers do, when they can afford it, for the ends of the earth? She could telegraph his country house, "I believe in happy endings," and she could wire his New York club, "Just jilted. June." One or the other message ought to catch him.

The old-fashioned doorbell rang again, this time with befitting solemnity. June felt frozen to the little satin sofa now. Alonzo had had a reaction! He had come pompously back to announce that he had forgiven her. There would be nothing in the least amusing in his repentance, because it would bring up all the old problems. June wouldn't be obliged to bind herself to an engagement, and yet he would nag ceaselessly until she did. There was no sound on the basement stairs, which fact announced that the colored maid was tired of answering doorbells. June waited. So did the colored maid, and so did Alonzo, without. Then the old-fashioned bell again reverberated respectfully.

"It's the last time!" grumbled the colored maid on her way through the hall. "Never no more to-night."

Hesitant footsteps approached the parlor door. There was a low murmur

of voices. June couldn't believe her eyes, when the unintrusive footsteps stole over the threshold. Inertly she sat and let Horace walk all the way down the long room to the little satin sofa.

"I saw the death notice," he said quietly. "Although I'm too late for the funeral, I hoped I could be of some help." Then he appeared to perceive her dress and fan for the first time. "Was I wrong?" he asked quickly. "Wasn't it Uncle Ben?"

For the second time Uncle Ben had brought them together!

"Oh, yes, it was Uncle Ben," said June, whose knees were shaking frightfully. "But if he knows, he understands why I'm dressed this way. I thought that this was my last free night, otherwise, of course, I couldn't have dressed up on account of Uncle Ben. But now, I *don't* have to marry Alonzo or anybody else."

Inconsistently, even as she uttered the last words, she rose and ran straight into his open arms.

"I told you I liked unhappy endings!" she said. "I never, was entirely happy until I was jilted."

And the two gentle cowards thereupon resolved to marry before Alonzo could possibly have time to change his mind again.

### GREEN IN FLOWER

NOW the green begins to flower:

Dogwood leaves are ruby fire,  
Clover ends an emerald hour

In a smoldering, golden pyre;

Sumac lifts a burning torch,

Maples glow a fiery rose—

Autumn's leafy blossoms scorch

Bravely toward their brown repose.

Brown and ashen they will grow—

Gone their brief and crimson breath.

Lovelier will be the snow,

And the whiter blossom, Death.

CLEMENT WOOD.



# Katie the Kid

By Thomas Burke

Author of "Limehouse Nights"

**K**ATIE the kid was none of your rapturous, languishing kiss-me girls. She was a stunner. She was a spanker. She was a jazz of a girl. She knew Spitalfields, whose dun light was the first she saw, as few people know their native place. She knew it inside out. Many times had she taken it to pieces that she might find out what made it work; and when she thus tampered with it she seldom put it back correctly. There was usually a cog missing when she had finished with it. And for perhaps three or six months the proper motions of Spitalfields were retarded while the cog picked oakum or made sacks under State supervision.

Yes, Katie the kid was a nark. She was by no means your common nark, who is a poor, spiritless, servile fellow, cringing to his employers and going in bodily fear of his victims. She had the game well taped. She knew all the tricks of the times, and her ample sleeve held others, not yet of the times. In heart and sinew she was concrete. She took money from the gangs and money from the police and sold the plans of each to the other. She walked about Commercial Street and its cowering alleys with the tread of the conqueror.

She strode. She moved with the sturdy grace of a steel ship, and her long, lusty limbs swayed forward as if making way through advancing seas. A nest of dense, crisp curls was built against her big bright face from which glowed defiant eyes of jet. She wore the best feathers and drank the best beer and put a little bit by.

And then the big fool fell in love.

She fell in love with Freddie Frumkin, who was known to local sportsmen as a likely lad. She first saw him at a series of trial contests at a little boxing hall on the south of the river; and his lithe, quivering figure and his shining white skin as he danced about the ring and received blow after blow with game nonchalance, set her blood adancing and aquivering and filled her with an emotion which she hardly understood. It was new to her. In the eighth round he was knocked out, and, though hitherto she had felt only contempt for the defeated in any kind of contest, this knockout blow went straight to her heart. It first cracked—this concrete heart of hers—then swiftly melted. That night she took his image to her pillow and lay awake in blessed brooding and knew that love had come to her;

and being, with all her naughty tricks, fiercely modest in physical matters, she was suddenly abashed and humiliated.

Soon, diffidently, by means which every woman can employ, she sought his acquaintance and won it. By the same means she made him know the state of her feelings; and he—well, he was a big, healthy boy, and when he looked upon this big, healthy girl and heard her words the thing was done. Thereafter they went about together and agreed in everything. At all his contests Katie the kid was present, as near the ring as she could get, to exhort him to victory and blight his opponent to ineptitude.

Glibly, as one long skilled in misrepresentation, she told him her story: how she was without parents and worked in a cigarette factory near the Tower; how she lived alone, and spent her spare time in reading books borrowed from the free library, and never went about with boys or strolled along her local Monkey's Parade, deeming such doings unworthy any self-respecting girl. Whereat Freddie glowed and wondered that so sweet and gentle a girl should have seen anything in a rough young pug like himself or should even suffer his company. He told her so and said that she made him feel ashamed and made him want to do better and bigger things. You know how it is with your first girl.

On this Katie began to think. She began to think about herself, and her stock of self-esteem dropped sharply. If she inspired Freddie Frumkin with a desire for nobler ways of life, he in turn inspired her with yearnings. He was so clean and cool and simple that she discovered in herself a desire for clean and cool and simple things. She tried suddenly to cut the nark business and the secret commission business. To the loud derision of the Geranium Street police station she started the follow-the-gleam business. As no man is so ardent a teetotaler as your reclaimed

dipsomaniac, so with Katie the kid. She placed herself in the hands of the local settlement workers and set about looking for steady and decent employment. It was even said that she was to attend the mission meetings on Wednesday evenings, but her reformation did not go so far as that. Such backsliding didn't suit the police. They made a grand remonstrance.

"Dammit!" said the police inspector. "What the hell's she want to turn pious for? With anybody else it'd a-bin all to the good for us. But *her!* We can't get on without her! We gotter git her back some'ow."

They did. Remonstrances failed, but economic pressure succeeded. Her savings were soon exhausted; and wherever the local settlement workers went among employers with stories of her industry and moral rectitude, they found that the police had been before them. There was no job for Katie the kid. So quietly she took up again her secret duties. Fortunately, Freddie's home was by Bermondsey Wall and was severed from hers by the river. News of the north side seldom reaches the south, and they had no common friends. Thus she was able to continue as a nark in Spitalfields, while in Bermondsey she was a factory hand with yearnings toward self-culture.

Three evenings a week, when Freddie was not engaged, she would go to him and they would walk comfortably together in the flare and glitter of Jamaica Road, where the girls parade with frolicsome frocks and gleeful eyes; or down the more modest byways where lights are few. It was just after her return to her old employment that Freddie spoke casually of his need of a punching ball. He was not yet promising enough to attract gifts of equipment from backers, and he had only the gymnasium at the boxing booth in which to train. Which was a damn nuisance. A punching ball, to be fixed in the



back yard of his home, would be the very thing. But they were damn expensive.

Katie pondered the idea at night, and she guessed why he could not purchase the ball. There had been rides on the bus on Sundays, some visits to the local music hall, and a little gilt cross and chain for her sapling neck. From her there had been as yet no gift; her savings were gone, and for the moment crime was short and there was little coming in from the police. She went home that night to devise means of raising money and to study sporting papers for some hint as to the price of punching balls.

Next day something came her way. In the street local gossip made much of the theft of many rolls of cloth from a Spitalfields warehouse. Thieves and cloth were well away and the police were "pursuing inquiries." The sergeant sought her, met her in the street, flicked an eye at her, and disappeared down an alley. She followed him.

"Ah, Katie—just looking for you! Got a job for you! You heard about this cracking of Higgins' place. Well, there's four dozen rolls of cloth gone—good stuff, too. We're stuck on it for the moment. We're watching all the boys, but haven't got anything so far. Now, it's up to you. Higginses are offering a reward, and if you can put us on to the stuff or the men, you'll do yourself a bit o' good. I dessay there might be a couple o' quid in it for you. See? So put yer back into it!"

"Right-o! I'll have a look around."

That day her mind ran on rolls of cloth and punching balls. A couple o' quid. That ought to be sufficient for the purpose. So she set to work, the punching ball suspended before her, with gentle thoughts flitting about it, while in the recesses of her mind the rolls of cloth covered some crushed, but still moving instincts. It was her first job since her reformation, and soon the

old fever of the hunt crept into her veins. It ran with her blood and set a pace; and the thrills that some find in strong drink and some in perfect works of art coursed about her shoulders.

Into the dark places of Spitalfields she went; into places where many men would not go; into places of dirt and horrors and crawling beastliness. She went, too, into bright places; into well-kept taverns, where men were clean and flashily dressed. She hung about high-ways and alleys. She gathered a word here, a half sentence there. She drank heavily with old acquaintances and casual company. It was Dick the duke who set her on the way with a shrug and a few words.

"Getting about a bit to-day, ain't you, Katie? What's the game. You don't mean to say you're on Higgins' affair? Eh? Good heavens! Fancy wasting yer time on that! You're worth better jobs than that. Blasted lot of amateurs. They've hid it, kid. *Hide it!*"

Katie made no clear reply to his remarks, but stood him another drink and drank with him, and had another at his shout. Then she strolled idly away. There was but one place in Spitalfields where stolen goods were hidden, and to that place she went. Near the market she stopped at an open-air coffee car-avanserai, labeled "Jumbo's," which stood under an arch, backed against the doors of a disused storage vault. She took a cup of coffee here and used her eyes. She made goo-goos at Jumbo and chi-iked him.

"Got a new suit, eh, Jumbo? My word, we're coming it, ain't we? Nice bit o' cloth, too!"

A minute movement at the corner of his lip on the word "cloth," which would have been unperceived by others, or have conveyed nothing if it had been perceived, satisfied Katie. She was watching for it.

She ambled back to Geranium Street.

"I found that bunce."

"Good girl! You shall have a nice sweetie for that. Where is it?"

"Old Jumbo's got it. In that vault behind 'is place. 'Tany rate he knows all about it."

"Oho! We'll send round and have a little chitchat with Jumbo."

"Right-o! I'll wait. When do I get the dough?"

"Just as soon as we confirm it, ducky."

The officer called for a plain-clothes man and assigned him to a friendly cup of coffee with Jumbo. Within half an hour he returned.

"I seen Jumbo and warned him. Same old Jumbo! Injured innocence. Didn't know nothing about it. Minding it for some customers of his. However, I put the wind up him properly. There's two or three of 'em, but young Ben's one of 'em, so if we get young Ben 'e'll split on the others straight-away. You know what he is. If we get him we've as good as got the others. He's calling fer the stuff to-night with a cart. It'll be quite easy, 'cos I warned Jumbo extra special and put it across him. Said we'd have him fer a stretch if he as much as winked an eye."

"Right-o! Still, we may as well have an observation man on there. Just send Gordon along."

"Satisfied?" asked Katie.

"Yes, kid, that's all right. Here you are. Now go and get yesself a good rump steak, with lashings of onions. You look a bit fagged."

She took the money, but her first thought was not food, but the shop in Kingsland Road where athletic goods were sold. To it she went, and later returned with her purchase. In her one-room home she cooked herself a hotch-potch meal, with tea. And when she had eaten she straightened herself and set out for Bermondsey.

During the walk her mind gamboled

in pleasant pastures. She saw Freddie's strong white arms at work upon the punching ball, and glowed with pride as she anticipated his raptures at the long-desired gift.

They met near Cherry Gardens Pier, where it is dark, and at once his arms were about her and his lips upon hers, while she fingered lovingly the blue scarf about his neck. Then they walked toward Jamaica Road. Under the lamplight he noticed the unwieldy parcel she was carrying.

"What you got there, kid?"

"Aha! Never you mind! You wait and see."

He led her to the "Man in the Moon," kept by a friend of his, who allowed him the use of the back room, where were seats and a fire. He was in high feather.

"Now, Katie, order what you like. I bin a bit short of the ready lately, but I shall be a bit easier next week. So 'ave just what you like." She chose a port and lemonade, and he ordered a ginger ale for himself. Now then, what you got in yer parcel?"

Proudly she tossed it to him.

"Open it."

He opened it.

"Well, I'm damned! Now Katie! Now, who'd a thought of you doing that? Now, really! But, I say— Well, well, well! And you bin an' bought this fer me? No, but— Well, there. You didn't ought to 'ave, though. Really, Katie, you didn't. They cost a lot o' money, I know. More'n you can properly afford. You didn't— Oh, you dear kid! Well, if you ain't a real pal!" He tossed the ball to the ceiling, and caught it and tossed it back again. Then he became serious.

"But, Katie—you good girl! You shouldn't 'a done it. You've 'ad to work dam 'ard fer this, I know. You've 'ad to do a lot of overtime and saving up.

Fancy you thinking all this of me. But it's fine, though. And from you! Just what I wanted, too. Oh, Katie, you think too much of me. I ain't 'alf good enough fer you. I don't deserve a girl like you should think so much of me. I ain't worth your—your—love. I—'Ere—what's the matter?"

For suddenly Katie spluttered over her port and burst into a howl of sobs, and big tears ran for the first time down her firm dry cheeks.

"Why, Katie, kid, what's up? You bin overworking now—that's it. And you ain't bin feeding properly. You bin starving yesself to get this ball. 'Ere—I say— Oh, Katie!"

"Oh, I can't keep it up no longer, Freddie. 'Tain't what you think. It's—it's me! It's—it's your l-love! It's the way you think of me. I ain't worth it. I'm a beast. I'm a liar!"

"'Ere—don't be silly, kiddie."

"I ain't. I can't keep it up no longer—not when you talk to me like you bin doing. You're so clean and strong and—and—right! And I'm—I told you I worked in a cigarette factory and was respectable and—and it's all lies. I never bin in a factory. Go away—don't come near me! Lemme go 'ome. I didn't buy that ball by saving up or overtime at the factory. I'm—I'm a c-copper's nark. That's what I am. A dirty, sneaking copper's nark! That's what bought your punch ball. It ain't fit fer you to use. It's dirty. Throw it away. And throw me, too, fer making you love me and leading you on with l-lies!"

Freddie turned about the little room, shamed apparently at the sight of woman's distress. But his brows were puckered. He dug his hands deep into his pockets.

"Er—Katie?"

"'M."

For a moment he hesitated, then went on:

"You ain't telling me anything. I knew."

"You *knew*? Knew what?"

"That you're a nark. I knew it before."

"*Knew*? When? Who told yeh?"

"I known it all along."

"You known it all along? And bin out with me and kep' up with me? You? You—let me go about with yeh, and said all those things to me—as though you meant 'em?"

"I did mean 'em. I do mean 'em."

"You—so clean and straight, ready to go about with *me*, knowing what I was!"

"'M. I knew you was a nark. But I see something fine about you. About the way you loved me. I see you wanted to be something better, 'cos of me—like I felt about you. I knew you tried to cut it out—over in Spitalfields. I 'eard all about it. And I knew then that you was all right. And I loved you for it. Any feller would. And I says to meself: 'She's straight, although she's bin a nark, and she loves me, and as soon as I can get a bit together she shall come out of it and we'll make a fresh start.' That's what I said. And I ain't going to throw you away! It's fer you to do the throwing. Listen, Katie. I loved you, knowing what you was. You loved me, thinking I was different from what I am. What d' you think my job is?"

"Boxing, ain't it?"

He made a noise of disgust.

"Boxing? No! Boxing's only a side line with me. I want to be a boxer, but there's no money in it yet. Katie—I'm just a common, dirty, side-door burglar—that's what I am. It was me and a pal what did that business of cloth from Higgins' what's all over the newspapers to-night, and— Hi—George! Quick! Brandy! Quick! Katie's fainted!"



# More Super-Women

By Anice Terhune

Madame Malibran:

The Golden-voiced Siren.

Nay, never ask this week, fair lord,  
Where they are gone, nor yet this year,  
Except with this for an overword—

But where are the snows of yesteryear?  
—*Ballad of Dead Ladies.*

ON the night of November 29, 1825, a slender, seventeen-year-old Parisian girl faced a New York audience, with thumping heart. Her eyes were big with fright. Her hands were ice cold. She even was too panic-stricken to faint. For a tremendous responsibility weighted down her childlike shoulders. Not only was this the girl's first appearance before an American audience—that, in itself, was enough of an ordeal for the little seventeen-year-old—but she was bringing Italian opera, for the first time, to American shores. Small wonder that she trembled and felt a wild desire to run away!

Instead, she opened her mouth and sang, and with the first golden note her nervousness disappeared. Artist to the bone, she forgot everything except the part she was singing, and she threw herself into her rôle—that of *Rosina*, in "The Barber of Seville"—with such fresh, piquant gayety that her audience went mad with enthusiasm.

In one stroke, she had conquered America; conquered it for herself and for Italian opera. The world was at her feet, clamoring to do her honor. The future rolled out before her a wide,

sunlit road paved with triumphs. Fortune seemed miraculously bent on shaking all the good things of life into the lap of the youthful prima donna.

Yet it was not fortune, but the girl herself, who had done it all.

Now let me tell you her name. She was a Spanish girl, Maria Felicita Garcia, daughter of Manuel Garcia, Europe's foremost tenor. Maria was born on the 24th of March, 1808.

From the first, Garcia determined that she should be a great singer. He was so set upon this that he began to teach her to sing scales just as soon as he thought her old enough to learn anything at all. When she was only five, she played a child's part in "Agnes," in Naples, and then undertook the prima donna rôle, to the wild delight of the audience.

Maria's music lessons were punctuated with tears on her part and curses on her father's. For old Garcia was a cruel taskmaster, and patience was not one of his characteristics.

When the little girl was nine years old, Garcia took her from her home in Paris to England, where singing lessons and other education became the one and only business of Maria's life.

She was horribly afraid of her father, who beat her, howled at her, and sometimes even foamed at the mouth with insane rage at her childish mistakes. Her voice, though wonderfully

beautiful, was full of defects. Up to the time of her death she had to go through certain difficult exercises each day in order to keep her vocal cords flexible. Then, too, although she had a marvelous range of three octaves, the upper register had a tendency to sound thin in the middle, and if not closely watched, it was prone to wander a bit from the key.

Garcia hauled these defects, with pitiless persistency, out into the strong daylight. Though he had no self-control, he was an astonishingly fine teacher. Also, it was part of his wise, brutal training to make little Maria suffer.

"I know my daughter's disposition," he was wont to say when horrified friends took him to task for his treatment of the girl. "Maria can never become great, except at the cost of much suffering. She has a proud and stubborn spirit. She requires an iron hand!"

However that may be, by the time she was sixteen, she was not only one of the finest singers of her day, but a great actress as well. She spoke and wrote in five languages, and she could sing oratorio and comic opera with equal ease.

Then came her first great chance. Madame Pasta, who was singing in "The Barber of Seville" at Covent Garden, was taken seriously ill just before a performance. Maria was asked, at a moment's notice, to take Pasta's place as *Rosina*.

From that instant she sprang into fame. Though she was far from beautiful, though she still had many faults to contend with in singing, she was so much a super-woman that she was hailed as a peerless beauty and a flawless singer.

London cheered itself hoarse over her. Scores of men fell in love with her. Apparently the whole world wanted to marry her. Yes, to marry

her. She had far more proposals than propositions.

England talked incessantly of the "in-describable brilliancy" of her high notes, and of her low notes "so soft and sweet."

"Her voice was heart-searching and thrilling," says Henry Chorley, one of her adorers. "She may not have been beautiful, but she was better, insomuch as a speaking Spanish countenance is ten times more fascinating than many a faultless angel face such as Guido could paint. A healthy tint with but a slight suggestion of yellow in complexion, great mobility of expression in features, and honest, direct brightness of eye, refinement in form of head and set of it on shoulders—all were hers!"

Maria was engaged at once for the remaining six weeks of the opera season, and during all those six weeks her dressing room was filled to the threshold with flowers from a multitude of lovelorn swains, swains who vainly tried to thrust their hearts at the super-woman's feet.

But that was all the good it did them. For each and every one of the suitors found himself, soon or late, facing the determined and irate countenance of Papa Garcia. No hero of old ever found it as hopeless a task to attack the dragon guarding his enchanted princess, as did the youths of 1825 in their schemes to get the better of Garcia. He was Cerberus, the Minotaur, and Siegfried's dragon rolled into one, when it came to vigilant guarding of his daughter.

Finally, the lovers became too numerous and too persistent for even such a cranky and clever old gorgon, so Garcia played a trump card which he had had up his sleeve all the time. Suddenly he snatched the fascinating Maria from under their very noses—at the same time grabbing up a bunch of Italian operas and some other singers—

and whisked her on to a boat bound for America.

You know, already, how successful his venture was—that is, it was successful in starting Italian opera in America, and in causing his little daughter to shine brilliantly as an international star.

But Garcia's strategy in eluding ardent suitors was a miserable failure; for the suitors came recklessly tumbling over the footlights in America, just as they had in England. And in the forefront of the crowd leaped a middle-aged French merchant named Malibran.

To Papa Garcia's horror Maria straightway returned Malibran's love. The girl who had laughed at the gilded and titled flower of Europe's young manhood succumbed to a man old enough to be her father.

Garcia found that he had jumped from the frying pan into the fire; he longed to snatch away his daughter and go back to England again. But that was impossible, for the flood of popularity, once started, could not be checked without checking the flood of money which poured into the Garcia coffers. And certainly Papa Garcia was of no mind to stop that! So the songbird was allowed to sing on, and to turn her golden notes into golden bank notes; while between the acts Garcia stormed and tore his hair, and forbade Malibran to set foot in the theater or in the hotel which sheltered the Garcia family.

At last, Maria wearied of the struggle. She had worked hard, bitterly hard, all her life. She had thrown herself heart and soul into fulfilling her father's wishes.

In the midst of her dazzling success, her delicate, sensitive soul longed for gentle treatment, for the quiet haven of requited love. She was sick of her father's brutality; so, after a whirlwind courtship, the pair circumvented old Garcia and were married in spite of him, or perhaps because of him.

The marriage turned out badly.

After the first few delirious weeks, Maria found that she had exchanged one Cerberus for another. Only this time, the Cerberus set himself to guard her money instead of herself.

Hardly had the honeymoon begun to wane before the supposedly rich Malibran went bankrupt. One night the bride came home from her operatic triumphs and found her spouse imprisoned for debt. She rushed to the place where he was held. There she discovered that she had been shamefully cheated by her husband, that Malibran was nothing but a clever scoundrel. He speedily made known to Maria that she was expected to pay all his debts, and to support him henceforth by her singing, indeed that that was what he had intended her to do all along.

Maria could not agree to such a plan. There was a frightful quarrel, which ended by her paying over to Malibran's creditors all the money that had been settled on her as her marriage dower.

For five months the pair led a cat-and-dog existence. Then, in the zenith of her stage success, Maria shook herself loose from her rascally, worthless husband, and returned alone to Europe. Incidentally, she shook herself loose from her father. With a sigh of relief, more than tinged with sadness, she set her face toward the Old World.

She reached England just in time for the Birmingham Music Festival, and she decided to make her second English debut there.

The festival managers were glad enough to get her, but there was very little space left on the program at that late date. So they put her on the same bill with Miss Paton, a newly risen star, who was to sing six songs.

"Malibran Garcia," as she now called herself, found herself down for only two!

Her eyes snapped with indignation, as she sought out the chairman of the festival committee.



"Have you, sir, sanctioned this program?" she demanded hotly.

"Yes, madame," was the answer.

"I had hoped it had been issued *without* your sanction!" she cried. "It assigns me two songs, both of them very hackneyed. It gives six to Miss Paton. She has an established reputation here; mine is yet to make. Therefore, if preference should be given to any one, it should be to me!

"On my success here depends my chance of success in London. You give me no chance of success. I want no favor; give me justice. I do not ask it as a stranger; I demand it as my right.

"Give me, at least, as much opportunity for displaying what ability I may have as you give Miss Paton," she went on. "Gentlemen"—appealing to the whole committee—"I ask for fair play. I want no more; I will take no less!"

She had worked herself into a great passion, and the directors tried in every way to soothe her; every way except by changing the program, which, they assured her, was already printed.

"Very well," she said at last, drawing herself up with great dignity. "You commit injustice, and refuse to remedy it. Let Miss Paton sing her six songs; but let me, also, sing six."

Again she was informed that it was impossible to change the program.

"Well, then," she cried, "if you will not right me, I shall right myself!" and she quitted the room in a magnificent rage.

The fateful evening came. The theater was packed. The world of fashion was there with unbroken rank. The pit and the stalls glittered with diamonds.

The concert began. Things went without a hitch. Several lesser artists sang, and then Miss Paton, the reigning favorite, was heard in the first two of her six scheduled songs.

At last it was Malibran's turn. As

she stepped before the footlights, she was greeted with a volley of applause which wholly surprised and almost unnerved her. She stood perfectly still for a moment, with head bent and her eyes upon the floor, hardly knowing how to acknowledge the marvelous reception. As soon as she was sure of herself she started to sing the first of her paltry "two songs."

Never had she sung more beautifully. Peel after peel of applause followed; and when Mori, the conductor of the orchestra, tried to lead her away, he saw it was useless to attempt to take her off the stage; so he took himself off instead and left Malibran in the hands of the audience.

Still the applause kept up without ceasing. Finally the singer ran to the back of the stage and picked up a piano stool. Hurrying forward with it, she sat down at the piano, motioned the orchestra not to play and, with agile fingers, began the prelude of the song she had already sung. When she came to within a note or two of the end, she suddenly paused, smiled wickedly at Mori, who was standing in the wings, shook her head at him, and instantly began on a new song.

The audience was wildly delighted; Mori and the committee were perfectly helpless. This time it was a Spanish song she sang.

When she thought the applause had lasted long enough, Malibran rose. But the audience would not let her leave the stage. The stalls, the pit, the gallery all knew what they most wanted, and they meant to have it.

Once more Mori tried, smilingly, to lead the prima donna away. The poor man was roundly hissed for his pains and flew out of sight again.

Saucily, Malibran waved her hand at his retreating back, and sat down at the piano, while the audience settled themselves in their half-guinea stalls with sighs of rapture.

When Malibran had sung quite all the songs she wished, and no amount of applause could bring her out again, it was nearly midnight—and behold, Miss Paton had sung only *two* instead of her six songs!

Behind the scenes there ensued a gay furor, in which most of the singers joined with such of the audience as could force their way toward Malibran's dressing room.

"Madame, you have played us a trick," cried the director.

"Oh," answered Malibran, giving him her hand with a ravishing smile, "you know I said that I would right myself if you wronged me!"

Under the name "Malibran" she swept through Europe in triumph, winning fame and wealth, and leaving a trail of broken hearts wherever she went. In spite of the havoc she wrought among men of all stations, she did not let herself fall in love. Her one tragic venture in that line cured her—for a time. She had resolved not to believe in love vows, no matter how sincere they seemed. Heart free and happy she remained, lavishing her fortune on the poor.

"Her heart was too big for her little body," says Lablache. "Her friends often had to interfere to keep her from giving away every penny she had."

She sang ever more beautifully, acted always more wonderfully, from year to year.

"She fired all fellow artists with her genius," writes a historian. "She had the world at her feet, and was set apart from all other singers by the novelty and richness of her style, her prodigious instinct for art!"

Also, she had a "prodigious instinct" for a good time. She loved sports of all sorts, and was passionately fond of riding and of swimming.

Her winters she spent in her beloved Paris, the spring and autumn she spent in England and in the larger continental

cities. Occasionally she made longer professional tours to Naples, Milan, and other Italian cities. And always she was received with wild acclaim wherever she went. On one of these tours she received ninety-five thousand dollars for eighty-five performances at La Scala in Milan, which was a record price for those days.

H. N. P. Willis gives a graphic picture of her at this time:

"She sang the divine music of 'Norma,'" he says, "with a fullness, an abandonment, a passionate energy and sweetness which seemed to come from a soul rapt and possessed beyond control, with the melody it had undertaken. She melts all criticism into love and admiration. They were never done calling her on the stage after the curtain had fallen. After six reappearances she came out once more to the footlights and, murmuring something inaudible from lips that showed strong agitation, she pressed her hands together and bowed until her long hair, falling over her shoulders, nearly touched her feet, and she retired in tears. She is the siren of Europe for me!"

Her naturally gay spirits kept her going. These same bewitchingly gay spirits made her absolutely irresistible in light opera, though her greatest triumphs were gained in tragic rôles.

Wherever she happened to be, her charm drew about her a circle of devotees, fascinated by her brilliant conversation no less than by her genius along a dozen other lines.

Unlike many of our super-women, she seems to have had a singularly beautiful character. All her historians agree on that, and one chronicler even goes so far as to say:

"Few women have been more beloved for their amiability, generosity, and professional enthusiasm."

Yet it was something more; it was Madame Malibran, the elusive super-woman, whom every one loved, and who

was supposed to love no one, who kept her suitors hoping against hope, as they followed her flower-strewn footsteps.

She used to say her heart was adamant, but there is at least one story to prove it was not. Willis tells of being at a drawing-room musicale where Malibran sang, as ever, most gloriously.

As the last note died softly away, the singer, always delicate and overcome by some unusual emotion, sank to the floor in a dead faint.

Instantly her worshiping listeners crowded around and hastened to lift her in their arms and carry her to an adjoining room where there was a couch. Some one ran for a glass of water; some one else for smelling salts. As the diva, at last, opened her eyes, she murmured in dreamy content.

"Is that you, Jules, dearest?"

If "Jules" was there, he kept her secret loyally, realizing that in her semi-conscious state she was not to be held responsible for the drowsy confession.

So, to the world she continued to be "the siren of the stony heart."

Then, one night, she chanced to meet young Charles de Bériot, a Belgian violinist. All Maria's solemn vows to remain forever stony-hearted were forgotten. On both sides it was a case of love at first sight. Forgetful of everything except the wild delirium of their love, the two rushed off to Brussels together.

As soon as it could be arranged, Maria got a divorce from Malibran, and in 1835—just ten years after her first wedding—she married De Bériot.

He was the one real love of her life,

as she was of his; and they were gloriously happy for a few months.

But disaster was hard on their track.

Maria had to cut short the honeymoon and go to England to fulfill a professional engagement. While out riding on a spirited horse she fell and was seriously injured.

One of her rules was never to break an engagement; so, in spite of the tears and protests of her friends, she went on with her concerts and sang without respite until the next autumn. At that time she was due at the Manchester Music Festival. Contrary to her physician's orders, she kept her appointment and sang gorgeously. The effort killed her. A nervous fever set in and she died within a few days.

On September 23, 1836, she drifted out of the world, after having crammed her bright, stormy, meteoric life into just twenty-eight years.

In that time she had already captivated the whole world, and won more hearts than almost any other woman of her day.

A statue was erected to her memory in Brussels. At that time it was the only state monument in honor of a woman artist. Europe mourned for her as for a queen.

She had lived long enough to know the joy of having, and the greater joy of giving; the joy of intellectual and artistic understanding; and the greater joy of adding her own immortal bit to the art of the world. She knew the sorrow, and, at length, the greater joy, of love. If she had rounded out her "threescore and ten," could she have gained more?

## AUGUST MORNING

THE elms were made of mist,  
The mist was made of blue,  
The blue was only beauty  
Looking through.

GRACE HAZARD CONKLING.



## A Dab of Local Color

By Richard Connell

Author of "Mr. Braddy's Battle"



**A**N angry night wind, enraged, perhaps, at the prices of the wares in the fashionable shops, howled down Fifth Avenue, making a noise like an angry night wind howling down Fifth Avenue. With a scream of rage it tore around the corner at Twenty-sixth Street, bustled, swearing, across Madison Square, and, whirling the powdery snow with it, wound in screaming spirals about the Metropolitan Tower, and blew its piercing breath full into the face of a leaden, brutal sky. On such a night do old ladies pity the poor sailors, and stern fathers cast out erring daughters. A few pedestrians, muffled to the eyebrow, hurried homeward through the night, each nursing in his bosom the hope that the janitor, with his eye on the Christmas season, but a week away, would be generous with his steam.

It was, one might say without fear of successful contradiction, a bad night for a poor young artist to be sitting on a bench in Madison Square without an overcoat. Yet Hendryck van Wyck Bleecker was doing that very thing, while his teeth played a frozen fandango, and his nose, of aristocratic mold, took on a distinctly blue hue. His clothes had been expensive, when they were new. No, that doesn't convey the idea. All clothes are expensive when new. Hendryck's had been very expensive, and, though well worn and speckled here and there with yellow and green paint, they still bore unmistakable evidences of having been minted

in a manner that would have pleased even the person who writes "What the Men Will Wear" in the theater programs.

Hendryck was a poor young artist. Weigh well those words. He had never sold a picture in his life, and it seemed to him, as he sat shivering on the bench, highly improbable that he ever would. He had tried to draw people, and he had drawn clothing-store dummies. His technique, his draftsman-ship were not bad. Some really fine artists—and in his time he had studied with the best of them—had been pleased to say that of him. But the stark truth was that he lacked soul. That was the trouble with his work. His people were just so much smeary paint—not human beings.

Hendryck reflected on this as he shivered on the bench, and we will leave him shivering there while we delve into his past and endeavor to discover, if possible, a bit more about him and just why this very beastly night found him overcoatless on a park bench in windswept Madison Square.

Hendryck's folks, who were, originally, Dutch, had been farmers on a small scale. His grandfather, several times removed, had sought arduously, but with meager success, to raise cabbages and hops on a tiny ten-acre farm situated on a low, boggy island near the sea. He had bought the farm for ten golden guilders and a small barrel of rum. After some years of labor on the unpromising land, he publicly ex-

pressed the wish that he had his run back again. However, finding no one to take the farm off his hands at any price, he expired one day amid his puny hop vines and his son inherited the farm. His son, in turn, passed it on to his son, and so it went from son to son until it became the property of the shivering young man on the bench, who was by inclination an artist and not a farmer. This little farm on a low island was all the young man had in the world.

Only one detail has been omitted from the foregoing narrative—a mere matter of geography. In this case geography is important. The location of that little farm is worth mentioning. The name of the island on which it was, and is, situated, is Manhattan. The farm of the first Bleeker now has a flourishing crop of towering office buildings where the cabbages and hops once raised discouraged heads, and I betray no confidence in stating, is appraised at some sixty million dollars.

This, naturally, brings up the question, why should a young artist, no matter how poor an artist he chanced to be, sit without an overcoat on a bench in Madison Square on a most unpleasant night, when he had sixty million hard-working dollars and a house like a public library on the Avenue?

There are three reasons, A, B, and C.

A is a girl. Name: Ann Hotchkiss.

B is the birth of an artistic temperament.

C is a Dutch conscience, which Hendryck inherited along with the farm.

Reasons enough, these are, for anything.

Hendryck is still shivering on the bench, but we leave him there, for the good of his soul, and examine the causes which led to his sitting there.

On the previous night Hendryck had called at the home of Ann Hotchkiss on the gold coast that fringes the east shore of Central Park. On that occa-

sion he had worn the newest of his seven suits of evening clothes, the furriest of his six fur coats, and the most opulent of his limousines. He had called to ask a question—the question.

He was not in the best of spirits. That afternoon an artist of high standing, who was French and frank, had called, at Hendryck's invitation, to see some of Hendryck's paintings. With scant regard for Hendryck's social or financial position, the artist had said that the paintings were as uninspired as a dish of cold, mashed parsnips.

"Monsieur has not lived, therefore he cannot feel," cried the artist. "Look at those face! No spark is there. Look at those eye! The eye of a had-dock in a fish market! Monsiour would draw types, the faces of the city. But what does he know of the personality of those he would paint? Nuzzing! How can one pour experience, emotion, passion into his work if he has not himself lived?"

This, Hendryck reflected as the limousine purred up the Avenue, was only too true. He had not lived. A private tutor, Groton, Harvard, always surrounded by a wall made of sixty million dollars and always under the necessity, by reason of the rarified air he breathed, of holding himself aloof from human enthusiasms, Hendryck had lived in a small cosmos of his own. Of the mystery and terror and wonder of life that Dreiser speaks of and its pangs and its yearnings, Hendryck knew nothing. Not that he had everything he wanted. No; there were two desires very near his heart that even sixty million dollars had so far been unable to secure for their master—one was to paint a really good picture; the other was to marry Ann Hotchkiss.

"Hendryck," said Ann when he had asked the question, "I cannot marry a man I do not respect, and I do not respect a trifler."

"A trifler?"

"Yes, one who has no interest in life, a mere dabbler."

"But my painting——"

"That's exactly what I mean. It is the one thing you have tried to do; but how hard have you tried? You were doing better work five years ago than you are to-day."

"But, Ann——"

"And I know the reason," went on Ann in her cool, low voice. "You can't paint because you are not human. You pretend to draw city types, and you don't know a single man who has less than three motor cars. You have lived in your narrow, lofty world so long that you've forgotten that there is another big, broad world, teeming with human beings who are warm and alive."

"I know, I know," said Hendryck, "and I have been planning—— But, Ann, give me a chance; don't say that this is final."

Ann smiled an enigmatic smile. But Hendryck read a promise in it.

He left her house, thoughtful, preoccupied.

On the sidewalk a man in a tattered suit, no overcoat, and with the face of a fallen angel, touched the arm of Hendryck's fur coat.

"Say, fr'en," he said in a husky voice, "if you don't help me out with a little change, I'll have to spend the night on a park bench."

The best of us have our moments of thoughtlessness, when, deep in our own affairs, we resent an interruption without comprehending it. The words of the man meant nothing to Hendryck; they fell upon his ears like the stereotyped plea of the professional beggar. Automatically Hendryck answered in a voice more chill even than the weather, "Apply to the Associated Charities," and, jumping into his warm limousine, he slammed the door. As he settled into the puffy upholstery, he looked through the glass of the door. He had

a sudden, vivid picture of the face of the man who had accosted him. It was a pale, handsome, unforgettable face, the face of one who had suffered agonies of mind and body. A bitter smile twisted the thin lips. Fierce hate, loathing, and contempt mingled in that smile. The beggar raised his hand to heaven, as if to curse the man in the limousine. Then with a snort the motor started and Hendryck was whisked away. But that night the face of the man haunted his dreams, and, as he lay between sheets of impeccable linen, his old Dutch conscience kept repeating to him, while the wind outside moaned an accompaniment, "That man will have to spend the night on a park bench. That man will have to spend the night on a park bench."

Next day Hendryck went to his elaborate studio in McDougal Alley to try to work. But two faces kept getting in his way. One was the face of Ann Hotchkiss. The other was the pale face of the beggar, with its bitter smile.

"By Jove, if I could paint that face," he said.

Then the conception of a great picture came to him. He would paint a man on a park bench in Madison Square, with the snow falling and the dim ghost of the Metropolitan Tower looming in the background. He would give it a pungent title—"The Heart of the City," or "And He Served at Chateau Thierry." He had tried such a picture once before. It had fallen flat. He remembered what the Frenchman had said to him and what Ann had said—he had not lived, so he could not feel. To paint such a man he must know exactly how it felt to spend a night on a park bench. He must study the types, as one of them, and hear them talk, not as the scion of the house of Bleecker, but man to man, as one down-and-outer to another. He looked out into McDougal Alley. A nasty day was turning into a brutal night.



"You let a man spend a night like this on a park bench," said a deep voice with a slight Dutch accent. Hendryck had heard this voice before, so he was not alarmed. It was his conscience.

So we find the owner of sixty million dollars sitting in penance on a park bench and storing up experience at the same time. He was a bit sorry, after an hour or so, that he had picked out such a very bad night. For one thing, his toes were uncomfortably numbish, and for another thing the human contact he had hoped for had not as yet been established.

A figure approached Hendryck's bench. It was a short, broad man, beneath that most ridiculous of all human gear, a derby hat. He came and sat down on Hendryck's bench.

"Fine night—for polar bears," he growled, and his voice sounded as if he'd eaten a thistle.

Hendryck assented. Here was a chance to study a type at close range. The man was a typical ne'er-do-well, an unmistakable, one-hundred-per-cent bum. Hendryck mentally tabulated his characteristics: derby too large and not a little battered, ancient Norfolk jacket that might once have had its day on the links on the back of its original owner, patched trousers, rough, stiff shoes, dirty gray sweater, and a round, red face. Hendryck studied the face. The eyes, he thought, had a look of cunning; the mouth was weak and betrayed an easy-going shiftlessness. The face wasn't bad; and it wasn't, certainly, strong.

They talked. The tramp expressed himself as most curious to hear why Hendryck was on the bum. Hendryck told him a moving story which, in some essentials, was quite true—that he had inherited a farm that was no good for farming; that he had tried to be a painter but couldn't sell his pictures; that his girl had turned him down because he was such a dub, and, finally,

that a flint-hearted landlord—is the adjective necessary?—had turned him out.

The tramp was sympathetic.

"It was a skirt that done for me, too," he said huskily as he wrapped a newspaper around his legs.

"Really?" asked Hendryck politely.

"You've told me your story. Here's mine," said the tramp.

"My old gent was a sky-pilot."

"I beg your pardon?" said Hendryck.

"Oh, a dominie, a preacher. Yes, I'm a minister's son. His ambition in life, as he often said in his sermons, was to be a perfect father to his children. So I ran away from home when I was thirteen. In them days the equipment of the perfect parent consisted of a bamboo cane, a cat-o'-nine-tails, and a strong right arm. My pop would have batted three hundred in any league. Well, at fifteen I got sent to reform school for swipin' a cheese from a dray. Ever been in a reform school? No? Well, the school part I get, but I don't know where they get that 'reform' stuff. I learned more in that school than a college could teach. When I come out, I led my class in picking pockets, shoving the queer, porch climbin', and forgin', and I was pretty good at safe crackin' and bond stealin'. But I didn't have much of a taste for crime. Guess I was too lazy. So I went on the bum."

Hendryck listened with glistening eyes. To be made the confidant of a crook and a hobo! Romance, long suppressed, thrilled within him. He listened eagerly.

"Well, kid," went on the tramp, as they huddled closer for warmth, "if you ever hit the brake beams just ask any old-timer you meet if he knows Hymn-book Harry. They call me that because sometimes, when in liquor, I'd sing 'em the hymns the old man taught me, keeping time on my spine with his bamboo cane. I traveled wherever the freight cars ran, panhandlin', stealin' a chicken now and then, graftin' in a

small way. I was a pretty worthless bum; and then, one day, all of a sudden, I reformed."

The man turned a sigh into a shiver. Hendryck was so interested that he forgot that his aristocratic nose was blue and that his preferred epidermis was puckered by common gooseflesh. Here was life, hot, so to speak, off the grid-dle. He was man to man with a man who didn't own a single motor car!

"Now comes the tear-jerkin' part," went on Hymn-book Harry. "One morning as I swung off a freight in a little town in Virginia, I saw a girl. Right then and there I reformed. She had the bluest eyes in the world.

"I got a job in a hay-and-feed store, and I worked like a slave. I got myself some civilized clothes. Also, I got to know the girl. Her name was—Fanny."

The name seemed to stick in his throat. Hendryck nodded his sympathy. The wind whinnied.

"She was a poor girl," went on the man, "and lived with her widowed mother. She worked as cashier in the Busy Bee Lunch Room. She was a shy little thing, always wore black dresses, and didn't have any idea how pretty she could be if she fixed her hair right and wore becomin' clothes. Oh, yes, I've a little of the artist in me, I guess. A tramp gets to know a little bit of everything when he's knocked about as much as I have.

"If you'd only get a nice light-blue dress," I said to her, when I got to know her better.

"But she always said she was too poor, and, besides, she'd look a sight in blue. Well, I worked like a horse, jugglin' bales of hay. There wasn't much money in it, but I felt good inside, for Fanny seemed to be gettin' to like me.

"One day I went to call at her little cottage. She was weeping. I made out that she had been asked to a swell party, a dance, on Christmas night, just three

days away, and that she couldn't go because she didn't have a dress.

"'Now a nice light-blue dress,' I began.

"'They don't grow on trees,' she sobbed.

"'Perhaps they grow on Christmas trees,' I said.

"That night I temporarily adjourned my reformation and rode the blind baggage to Richmond. I had in my pocket a small piece of metal called a jimmy. When I came back the next morning I had a blue silk dress in a box. I left it at Fanny's door early Christmas morning.

"I hadn't been asked to the dance, being a stranger in town, but I went and peeked through a window and saw Fanny dancing in her blue dress. Say, she looked like an angel. The next day I went to see her.

"'Did you enjoy the dance?' I asked her.

"'Oh, it was won—der—ful!' she said. 'And guess—Mr. Palumbpapulous—that was the Greek that owned the Busy Bee Restaurant—'said 'I never realized before how charming you are.'"

"'What does a fat Greek know about beauty?' I asked.

"'Don't you dare say a word about Nick—Mr. Palumbpapulous,' she says, with a blush. 'We're going to be married next Tuesday!'

"Now, friend, I ask you, do you blame me for straight off drinkin' a pint of corn liquor and tryin' to throw that Greek's restaurant out in the street, cup by cup? I called off the reformation and went on the bum again."

The sixty-million-dollar penitent felt an inward glow, the sort martyrs no doubt feel just before the lions start to nibble them. It was well worth a blue nose to sit there and hear Hymn-book Harry's little tragedy. Hendryck felt that he was squaring himself with

the pale-faced beggar of the night before and at the same time was seeing raw life at close range. The real thing! He felt new impulses born in him. By Jove, he'd be able to paint now! If only he could find for a model that thin-lipped beggar with the bitter smile. Hendryck could appreciate that smile now; he, too, had been an outcast on a park bench.

A clock struck midnight. Through the square, where the wind had grown calmer, but the cold more intense, strode a man. Hendryck and Hymn-book Harry watched him coming with easy, firm step. They could see by the park lights that he wore a top hat.

"A gent coming home from the theater," whispered Harry. "He may be good for a touch."

Hendryck van Wyck Bleecker, the penitent, had flashed on the screen of his mind the scene of the night before when he in a top hat had been "touched." And he had let that wan-faced beggar spend the night on a park bench. Once again he saw that bitter smile. His atonement must be complete. He must beg from the approaching stranger a few dimes for himself and Hymn-book Harry. He stood up.

The man in the top hat drew nearer, and the light showed his coat, befurred with the most plutocratic of furs. The master of sixty millions sidled up to the top-hatted man and said, imitating the husky whine he remembered from the night before.

"Fre'n', if you don't help me out with a little change, the two of us will have to spend the night on a park bench." He jerked a thumb toward Hymn-book Harry, huddled on the bench. Then he looked the top-hatted man squarely in the face.

The top-hatted man smiled a thin-lipped smile. Hendryck gasped. There was no mistaking that pale face, the face of one who had suffered much. The top-hatted man was the beggar who

had accosted Hendryck the night before.

But the top-hatted man was not looking at Hendryck. He was looking past him to where Hymn-book Harry sat. With a quick step the stranger reached the bench.

"Well, Harry Delafield, what in the name of all that's holy are you doing here!" he cried.

Hymn-book Harry looked sheepish.

"Hullo, Wyndham," he said calmly, and there was no trace of huskiness in his voice. "I'm just out digging up a little dab of local color. Been working on that story I told you about, 'Fanny and the New Blue Dress,' you know. Felt I was going stale. Simply couldn't describe how the tramp felt as he sat on the park bench. Thought I'd take the suggestion you made and get the experience firsthand. Guess I've had about enough of it. Are my feet still there? I can't feel 'em."

Hendryck, in a daze, listened.

The top-hatted man laughed.

"There's nothing like realism, is there?" he said.

Hymn-book Harry rose stiffly.

"That reminds me," he said. "How did the show go to-night?"

"Great," answered the top-hatted man, smiling his thin-lipped smile. "Everybody said that I did the best acting of my career. I had 'em sobbing, Harry. That part of the beggar was just made for me. And you know how I get up steam for it?"

"No; how?" asked Hymn-book Harry, gingerly rubbing his ears.

"Well, between the acts I hustle out to some side street or up Fifth Avenue, in my beggar make-up, and pan-handle a couple of people. That puts me in the mood for the rôle. Realism, old boy. Nothing like it."

"Oh, by the way!" exclaimed Harry, becoming suddenly aware of Hendryck, who stood shivering and wondering near by. "I want you to meet a young

artist with whom I was going to share a park bench to-night. He's a bit down on his luck, and I owe him an apology for trying my story about Fanny on him. Suppose we all go to my apartment, just over here on Gramercy Park, and have some supper."

He turned to Hendryck.

"This," said he, indicating the top-hatted man, "is none other than Wyndham Larrimore, the actor, of whom you must have heard. What did you say your name or alias is?"

The sixty-times-a-millionaire had fainted from the cold.

Half an hour later, in the apartment of Harry Delafield, the novelist, Hendryck, with a silk robe outside him and a couple of hot toddies inside him, told them who he was and why he had resolved to spend a night in the park.

"Well," remarked the actor, helping himself to a second hot chop, "there's one thing we all agree on, anyway."

"Spring it," said Harry, formerly Hymn-book Harry.

"There's nothing like a dab of local color," said the actor.

Hendryck was still sleeping tranquilly at noon next day, haunted no longer by pale-faced beggars or Dutch consciences, when his telephone rang.

"Hendryck," said Ann Hotchkiss, and her voice had honeysuckles and sunbeams in it, "I just heard from my cousin, Wyndham Larrimore, about what you did last night. I—I'm proud of you."

"Oh, Ann——"

"I called up to say that I'm sorry I accused you last night of being inhuman. And I think I was wrong to say you don't take your painting seriously."

"Oh, Ann——"

"And I also called up to say that I expect to be at home this evening."

"Oh, Ann——"



## THE SPELL

**I**F you have felt the urge and call  
Of tropic night and tropic sun,  
If you have breathed the tropic air,  
When day is done——

If you have sailed a southern sea,  
Where molten gold and silver play  
To twist your soul in ecstasy,  
And bid you stay——

If you have known your heart to fare  
Beyond your breast without your will,  
Seeking the answer to a prayer,  
Unanswered still,

This is your lot: no more your feet  
Can walk contentedly their way  
Through cities' glare, where hours are fleet  
And night is day.

BARBARA HOLLIS.



# Romance and the Morse Code

By A. E. Ullman

Author of "The Line's Busy"



YOU know women's clothes have been called a lot of things—especially by friend husband around the first of the month—but of all of them you can give me that little old word *trousseau*. Believe me, dearies, Mr. Webster would have been president if women had had the vote when he put that in the dictionary. *Trousseau*, I guess, is one of the first difficult words a girl learns to pronounce, and after that she never stops talking about it, even in her sleep. Of course, there's exceptions, but they're more to be pitied than gossiped about.

Anyways, it has been on my mind some since I received my little ring from Bill. You see, I thought that *trousseau* and wedding outfit meant the same thing until I met a certain party named Carrie who used to work at the flower stand in the big hote with me. Though work and Carrie agreed about as well as stepsisters, she always was the classy dresser—all front, like a mirror, and about as useful as the back of one—and when she left to go on the stage it was with the idea of getting engaged to some rich old party suffering from an awful cold. Well, it was after I had given the management two weeks' notice and got the afternoon off to do my little shopping, that I run into Carrie on the Avenue. I was coming out of a store where the cheapest hat they had was all you had to spend when some one grabs me and sings out my name. Honest, I didn't know her

at first, she was that fashionable, and her tired look would have had any one thinking her the real society sass.

"Of all persons—*Gertie!*" she says. "And what are you doing?"

Then I tells her about Bill, and how he got himself engaged to me, and pats my hair back carelessly so she can see the ring.

"How lovely!" she exclaims. "And you only have two weeks to buy your *trousseau*?"

"What do you think I am, the whole Metropolitan ballet?" I comes back. "I got just this afternoon."

She colors up a little at that and laughs.

"In that case," she says, turning her head slightly, "we'll have to help you with your shopping, won't we, Horace?"

And then for the first time I notices a mild-looking chappie standing a few feet away. At her words he quit biting his near-mustache and comes closer.

"Quite so, m'dear," he remarks softly.

"My husband, Mr. Stutz," says she proudly. "And now you come to lunch with us."

Though I never was strong for Carrie, before I knew it I found myself in a taxi facing her young hubby and wondering if she had found all the aged millionaires indestructible. Anyhow, during the lunch it comes out that the Stutz lad has a lot of money his father worked for and that Carrie and him have only been married a few

months. Carrie explains that they're living at a hotel because she can't see the housekeeping stuff and ain't strong anyways. What she probably meant, though, was that she was too tired to scramble an egg, for she got away with everything the waiter brought and asked for more. Guess about the only thing that Carrie ever refused was medical attention.

After that she goes on to tell me how the brave little man at her side had run after her for six months trying to make her life one grand, sweet two-step before she ever consented. And all the while she's getting off that stuff he just sits there looking masterful and red about the ears. He had poppy-blue eyes that always had a look of surprise in 'em, and it didn't take long to tell that he was one of those parties who don't know enough to toss away their own money and need a wife to do it for them. However, I was glad to see that Carrie was real fond of him. That sort of evened things up and made it a case of fifty-fifty. She wanted to escape work and he wanted to escape keeping company; and they were both succeeding.

Of course, we had music with our lunch. Just to sit down and enjoy a quiet meal while you talk about your dearest friends or the family in the flat above ain't fashionable any more. And take it from me, dearies, if things don't change you'll soon be walking into our leading restaurants and having the waiters hand you a menu of the latest tunes. For an entrée you'll probably get something like "Narcissus" or the "Spring Song," and if you're real hungry you can order something heavier, like Wagner. I'm not saying that there isn't one or two places in New York where you can still get food without music. One of them is the delicatessen store, and I haven't heard of Childs' installing any orchestras yet. Mebbe that's why Childs' is so popular.

Well, to make a long story short, it must have been two hours later when we started for the shops in another taxi. I told Carrie several times that I was afraid all the stores would be closed before we got through, but she says she knows just the place for me—Highlander's—where she got her own trousseau.

Right then and there I had a hunch that all was not going well with little me, and when we stopped in front of a tall, tony building, just off Fifth Avenue, I was sure of it. Any time a husky party, looking miserable in a dark-red uniform with gilt buttons, helps you out of a taxi and guards you all the way to the door so you can't escape, you can make up your mind that you're going to pay for it or have your husband advertise that he's not responsible for your debts. And after that if another party, who dresses better than Vincent Astor oughta dress, meets you, all smiles and sashay, you can come to the conclusion that you're in a place that our wealthiest and most exclusive families can't afford to patronize.

Now, mebbe that's handing you a laugh, dearies, but I know that the hotel lost most of its exclusive trade when we started to charge ten cents extra for bread and butter. Why, it wasn't until all the other big hotes did the same that they came back and consented once more to be pestered about their charge accounts being a year or so overdue. Yes, from the way they acted you'd think a nineteenth amendment had been passed over their heads.

Anyhow, Carrie must have been one of this Highbinder party's most careless customers, judging from the way she was received by the bald little man inside. He bowed until you thought he was doing his morning exercises, and smiled and asked breathlessly about her health. And while he listened to Carrie tell about how she'd been suffering something awful from freckles,



you would have thought he was a fan waiting for the end of the ninth in the world's series. All in all, he had more manners than a headwaiter, and you know they're too good to be real. I think we started in at the third floor—it was all décollete, Carrie said, and I took her word for it. Anyway, the gowns they trotted out didn't look as if a woman could get overheated in 'em, and if she did all she had to do would be to take off her earrings. If they get any décolletter we'll have to have fashion laws like we do speed laws for automobiles. Carrie tried several of them on and asked my opinion. Honest, I had all I could do to look her in the face.

Then we were escorted to another floor, like a couple of harmless patients, and Carrie saw so many things she needed herself that she forgot all about me again. Of course, I enjoyed it—what girl wouldn't, I ask you—and I tagged around after her until she'd laid in a dancing frock and a couple of afternoon gowns that she couldn't go without another day. To hear her tell about it, everything she had bought the day before was just simply worn to rags. And all the while she was complaining, her hubby followed us about saying nothing and trying not to look guilty.

By the time she got around to me again it was almost five o'clock and I knew that my afternoon was lost. Also, I knew that I wasn't going to do much buying in that place, 'specially after I'd priced handkerchiefs and found that the cheapest was fifteen dollars a dozen and only three dozen to a customer. I will say for Carrie, though, that she rushed me around then and had 'em show me a lot of things I never thought of. Finally I had to hint to her that I was buying my own trousseau and that Bill couldn't have the pleasure of footing my little bills until after the wedding bells rang out.

"All I want is a simple outfit," I tells her.

"But there's no difference between a trousseau and a wedding outfit," she says to me.

"Oh, yes, there is," I comes back. "And it's about six hundred dollars."

I could tell that Carrie was feeling sorry for me after that, and you know, somehow or other, I was feeling the same way about Carrie.

Naturally, I had to get busy after that and find a few places what still recollected that ninety-eight cents was U. S. currency. With these bargains and a little sewing bee over a few evenings, I managed to get together part of an outfit that suited me from the ground up.

Of course, this sentencing of myself to my hall-room suite attracted the attention of the landlady. In fact, the old dear came in to see if I had been crossed in love. She just naturally figured that when a girl stays away from the movies three nights running, it is only because she has lost her "steady." And, my, she looked real disappointed when I told her that there was no tragedy in my young life. I guess the least she figured was that I was pining away with a broken heart and waiting for some one to comfort me, because all I ever see her reading is that "Advice to the Lovelorn" you see in the evening papers. Funny, ain't it, dearies, the older some women get and the sadder their life is, the more they go in for that mushy stuff. I guess if it wasn't for stories and such, there wouldn't be any romance or joy in living in a lot of lives. You can kid about that kind of literature, but it's made things a heap brighter for a great many folks who've only really lived in their own imaginations.

I think the homeliest girl I ever knew had it on some proud beauties. She was the homeliest girl in school and the happiest, because she had the small-

est foot and was living in that story of Cinderella. She just went about expecting her Prince Charming to beat it around her corner on Second Avenue almost any day. That was a good five years ago, and it was only last winter I saw her trudging home with that same dreamy smile on her face, as if she was looking for some one. From the way she carried herself, you'd think she was walking on air instead of slushing through the snow without rubbers on. And at that, dearies, there may be some parties riding in carriages who'd be glad to change places with her.

Anyways, when the landlady hears about my engagement to Bill she sits right down and helps me with my sewing by talking about her own married life. Her husband had never been very strong, she says, and about the only exercise he ever got was in a little bowling alley around the corner. Though he wasn't able to work, it was pitiful to see the way he used to try to help about the house by going to the door whenever the mailman came. Never was there another man so considerate as him, to hear her tell it, and sometimes when he came home a little bit late, he'd sleep on the doorstep rather than wake her and the roomers up. He finally died, the poor man, as the result of a building falling on him, though she did say that he lingered for more than a year afterwards. Them had been the happy days for the old dear, all right. Just thinking of him made her cry, and just thinking of him made me cry, too.

After I showed her my diamond solitaire things cheered up so that I felt like I was sewing on a shroud. She said engagements were grand things for a rainy day, for one never knew when their husbands would lose their jobs. The fat woman on the parlor floor, f'r instance, had lived comfortably on a diamond sunburst for more than three months and expected her

ring would last 'em through a hard winter. Honest, dearies, just listening to that sort of talk would have you thinking that the path of matrimony was laid alongside a third rail.

Mebbe she got wise that she was making things about as pleasant as a pest, for she tells me good night and she hopes Bill and me will be as happy as the young couples in the second-floor front. She says she knows they're happy because they're always fighting, so wouldn't that put frosting on your wedding cake?

Believe me, it was a good thing the bunch was giving me a little surprise party that eve, or I would have been making bridal wreaths out of poison ivy in my dreams. Of course, it was some little party, and, as I may have mentioned before, some little surprise. Even one of my near-friends, Dottie, was there, after being taken sudden with a dreadful headache and getting the afternoon off to dress in. She told the boss that she hadn't suffered so much since the Sunday after she'd bought her new bathing suit, and she hadn't been able to go to work at all that day.

Anyways, the party comes off in a little dinky place what Pierre had discovered on one of the side streets, and while it may not have been fashionable, the only doubt any one had about the food was whether there was enough of it. We all sat around a big table trying to eat spaghetti without wearing it in ringlets, and stopping every few yards to kid one another. Probably we were amusing to some of the regular customers sitting at the side tables, and I guess some of them were amusing to us. Right across from us, I remember, were two men jabbering a blue streak in something that wasn't English and I hope never will be, and snapping their fingers and shaking their fists under each other's noses until you realized that they must be two friends ar-

guing about a ball game. One of 'em was real handsome, too—even his mustache looked marceled—and Dottie was admiring him. "Not for mine, though," she finally says. "I wouldn't know whether he was calling me dearie or asking me to pass the pickles."

Well, when I got down to the switchboard the next morning I was still thinking of the pleasant time I had had and wishing every one the same. Even my old friend, the ailing major, who'd come back to the big hote from some sanitarium where you have to sit around and eat nuts like a squirrel, didn't offer me any medical advice after looking at me twice. And say, dearies, you oughta have seen his face light up when he caught sight of the ring on my finger. After that he just wouldn't leave until he'd heard the whole story, and I sent up tea twice by mistake to that bachelor in seventy-three who just got back from Cuba, where they think the dry law is something to curb these ferocious hand laundries.

And that wasn't the only attention it attracted, either. I was just sitting there admiring it myself when I heard a voice say: "You lucky dear, you!" and I looks up to see a young heiress who was stopping with her uncle in suite A. Of course, every one about the hotel had heard about her and the oodles of money she had, and so I was surprised at the look I saw in her eyes, it was so wistfullike.

"I might say the same to you, Miss Starling," I says. And then we both laughs.

I could see right away she wasn't snippy like her uncle, who looked at most everybody as if they was doormats with the "Welcome" worn off, and so we got to talking.

"How happy you must be—marrying the man of your choice!" she says softly, and then I gathers she's sweet on some young man herself—an inventor or something—only her uncle

objects. It appears that she met him down South somewhere the year before, where he was experimenting with some wireless station, and, though he had money and family and all that, her uncle, who was her guardian, couldn't see him nearer than the next hemisphere without throwing a fit. In fact, he objected to any and every young lad who came near the girlie.

"He's been so kind to me in every other way," she says, "that I can't understand it."

"Well, some people curdle up like milk late in life," I remarks. "And you can't account for their actions."

"Uncle does look a little sour at times," she laughs. "Maybe that's the reason. But I'm not going to put up with it much longer."

Just then I spots the uncle pussy-footing toward us. "And to whom are you telephoning, Grace?" he asks softly, though his eyes were hard enough.

"Why, no one, uncle," she answers. "I just stopped on my way to the elevator to have a word with Miss Gertie here."

"Ah, I see," he remarks. "Miss—er—Gertie doesn't appear to have much to do." Then he leads her off after giving me a look you could paste a poison label on.

"All right, old party," I says to myself. "For that I owe you something, what isn't served on silver platters."

Honest, dearies, I just sat there after that thinking mean things and feeling just as mean, and I can tell you that's not my little way. I always believed that we should overlook one another's faults so that mebbe our own faults would overlook us, but there's something about that uncle dear that makes your hand itch. He just naturally seems to hold everybody in contempt, and I guess everybody returns the same feeling with illegal interest added. Of course, I wouldn't go as far as to say that there isn't a lot of

folks who think the world of him, but they're probably mentioned in his will. I bet he'd get about two votes, and then he'd be arrested for repeating.

Anyhow, a healthy mind shouldn't have anything like that on it, and so I was glad when that drummer came along who's always dropping promissory hints about theater tickets. Even hoping that you're going to a show is better than having no hopes at all. After that I got my mind on the things that I still needed for that trousseau and how I was to get another afternoon off.

Well, I managed to leave the hotel in the lurch for all of four hours all right. Also, I managed to leave a few things I thought I couldn't do without in the same way. Honest, dearies, if any one had talked to me about reduced prices after my little journey, I'd call them something that you wouldn't find in the "First Reader."

No, you can take it from me, when a pair of two-strap pumps is reduced to the insignificant sum of fourteen dollars—pumps that used to set us back about five dollars—it's not time to be setting words about the low cost of living to music, unless it's slow music. And when it comes to dress materials, they ain't reduced so much you need a magnifying glass. Mebbe some things have come down, but it's my luck to want the other things. Anyhow, I'm thinking they have a few more stories to fall off or a lot of us will be dressing in a way that'll make Mr. Ziegfeld's chorus look like they're dolled up for a tour of the arctic circle.

I was telling that little Miss Starling—only I was calling her Gracie by that time—about it the next morning, and she said it was the same way with everything, even gasoline. That last had me going like any millionaire, for I'd just bought a new pair of white kid gloves. Anyways, we gets off the high cost of existing and starts to talk about our little affairs of the heart.

Being an orphan, Gracie had been raised mostly in fashionable boarding schools, and, like me, she had had only one affair of the heart, and wanted that one to be enough. She had told me a couple of days before that her and that young inventor had been having the romance of their young lives until her uncle butted in and carried her off to California.

She used to spend hours at the wireless station with him, learning to read messages and send 'em, and he was fixing up a little receiving outfit for her to use in her rooms at the hotel, when uncle dear got wise to everything and had a brain storm. She said the young inventor would have followed her only he couldn't get away, but she had heard from him several times during the two months she was West. After that her relative seemed to keep watch on her, and though he allowed her everything in the way of entertainment and clothes, he never let her out of his sight with any nice young man.

I noticed, a morning or so after wards, that she was a little excited when she started to talk to me, and after a while she tells me that she's heard from that inventor lad and he's in New York for a flying trip. "Uncle Ned discovered the note—only it wasn't signed with Rob's name—and I wouldn't be here now only he was called down to some banking house. He was so furious, Miss Gertie, that he'd locked me in my room if he'd dared. I'd just elope with Rob—that's what I'd do—if the notoriety wouldn't mean the death of Aunt Betty. She's an invalid, you know."

She was going on to say more when the major struts up and starts to talk about that sanitarium he'd confined himself in. He tells me, while he's chewing a lot of cloves, what ain't fashionable any more, that he caught an awful cold there and had been doing nothing but take medicine. Mostly all

they wore was sheets like you see on them statues in the museum, it appeared, and the major couldn't sleep nights because of dreaming that he was whirling around in a cage. He thought it was due to indigestion from eating nuts.

Well, things got so busy after he left that I didn't give much thought to that Gracie girl and her troubles, and it was late in the afternoon before I saw her again. She was making for the switchboard just as fast as she could, and I could see that she was some excited.

"Oh, Miss Gertie!" she says. "I was to meet my friend—Rob, you know—in the lobby at four o'clock, and uncle just phoned he's on his way back. What shall I do?"

"It's four now," I answers. "Mebbe——" And then I stopped as I saw her face flush red. She wasn't paying any attention to me now, for there was a tall young man coming towards her at a twelve-cylinder clip and a look in his eyes that told a whole story.

"Grace," he says, sort of choking and taking her hand. "How good it is to see you!"

"Oh, Rob!" she faltered, and then a woozy look came on her face, for right behind the young inventor was her uncle.

"You will come to your rooms at once if you do not wish a scene here!" he says, passing between the two young people. "I have told you to have nothing to do with this young man here, and I'm still your guardian and will be for several months."

The inventor had taken a step forward, and I don't know what happened, only Gracie cast an imploring look at him.

"Very well," she says in a thin, icy voice, before the young man can say or do anything, but I noticed her foot was tapping on the floor.

I felt awful sorry for that inventor lad as he stood there watching Gracie

and her uncle make their way to the elevator. He'd been hit something hard—you could see that from the way the muscles of his face worked.

"The old party doesn't seem to think very much of you," I said.

At that he kind of turns sharply on me and starts to say something and stops. Finally he says: "Are you acquainted with Miss Starling?"

"She was just telling me that she expected you when his nibs butted in," I says.

"Was she?" he says softlike, and then looks at me steadily. "Well, she needs a friend like you, the poor child. And answering your first remark, Miss—er—Gertie—thank you—her uncle would object to any eligible man. While she comes of age very soon, he has control over her fortune until twenty-five if she doesn't marry. Perhaps you'll understand now."

"I certainly do," says I. "But what are you going to do?"

"I don't know," he groans. "Grace is so yielding with him that she'll never elope. He'll probably carry her off somewhere now where I'll never be able to see her."

"Anyhow, I wouldn't give up if I was you," I says. "You know romance has more lives than a cat."

"You don't understand," he says. "I'm only here for a few days. Grace and I both love each other dearly, and if we were once married he couldn't do anything. Lord knows, he could keep her money as far as I'm concerned! I have enough for the two of us." And then he goes on to tell me about himself. When I'd get real busy he'd walk away to the magazine stand until the rush was over.

Well, it was almost six o'clock, and I was getting my things ready to beat it, when he came back again and started to watch the elevators. Then all at once he sort of started, and I look back



to see the Gracie girl coming through the lobby with her relative. She was white, poor dear, and didn't once glance in our direction, and I could see his face fall. At the door leading into the dining room, however, she kind of stops as if she's faint. Her uncle spoke to her, and you could tell she was nervous because the fan she was carrying was tapping the woodwork of the door something fierce. I looked up quick at the inventor lad, and he's smiling all over. Then he takes a lead pencil out of his pocket and begins tapping something fierce himself on top of the switchboard.

Poor lad, I sure thought he'd gone looney, and I must have looked my thoughts, because as the girl and her uncle disappeared in the dining room he turns to me and says: "She just told me to trust in you and we'd get word to each other some way."

"Told you!" I gasps. "Why, you must be——"

"Oh, I forgot," he laughs. "She told me in the Morse code you use in telegraphing. A long tap with her fan meant a dash and a short tap a dot, and I answered her with my lead pencil. Here, I'll show you."

And take it from me, dearies, I made up my mind then and there that though Gracie was a blonde she wasn't a bit light-headed.

I gotta confess that I almost forgot this episode in our several young lives, I was so busy getting all my extensive wardrobe in the one trunk and my transportation all arranged to join Bill, until something happened and happened with a crash. Anyways, it's what I started out to tell you about, dearies, and I'm so happy I'll be humming in my sleep to-night. And I may say there'll be another happy female of the sex to-night, too—that Gracie girl—and the finish to what I'm trying to tell you is how I aided and abetted her. It was after I had got my ticket bought and

paid for that the plot thickened, as we say. Of course, I had noticed that the inventor lad and her wasn't getting a word together except by tapping with pencils or something. And soon that was cut out, as soon as her uncle saw that the young fellow was sticking around the lobby, because he began to have the meals served in their suite. Naturally that put a damper on the lad, for the only time he got a glimpse of her was when she went out for a morning drive with the uncle.

Believe me, I had given up all hopes for them and was thinking the lad had also, for when I came on this morning he wasn't around, as he had been every day since he first arrived. Even at ten o'clock, when Gracie passed on her way out for a drive, he hadn't shown up. And that it was I guess what started me to wondering what had happened to him.

Anyhow, after a slight start, I didn't have much chance to do any wondering, for between holding down the switchboard and saying good-by to every one I was some busy! It was when I was talking to a friend of mine, Imogene, and reaching in the drawer for my hatpin that I saw the tall figure of the inventor lad rushing my way about as gently as a cyclone.

"Miss Gertie," he chokes, "you can do Grace and me a life-long favor if you will. You're leaving to-morrow to marry the man you love. Won't you—won't you—help us to the same happiness?"

Well, he must have seen the answer in my eyes, for he didn't wait for me to speak, but rushed on: "First," he says, "call suite A. Ring two long rings—then a long, a short, and a long one."

"What does that mean?" I asks.

"The same as the tapping," he says. "It means O. K. and Grace will hear it. Her uncle will answer, of course, and you must get him downstairs to one of those booths. Pretend anything—



say anything—long-distance call for him—anything—so he leaves Grace for a few moments."

And would you believe it, dearies, I found myself acting just as if I was hypnotized. I rang as the inventor lad told me and then got that uncle on the wire. What I said to him and what other wires I put on while telling him there was a long-distance call for him I'll never know. All I know is that he hops off the elevator a minute later and rushes up to me like fury.

"Where's that call for me, young woman—where is it?"

"Right here," I says faintly. "Number three, please."

"Just as he goes in the booth I sees Gracie stepping out of the elevator and walking softly towards the rear.

How I managed to keep him fretting and fussing in that booth you'll have to guess. When he comes out his looks were enough to send me to a hospital, and when I mumbles something about central he just snarls and races upstairs. It was all of five minutes before he comes down again, and if ever there was a human imitation of a thundercloud, he was it. "Did—did you see anything of my niece, you baggage—you?"

Well, that got me going. "I may be baggage," I says, "but you couldn't travel in a cattle car if they thought anything of animals."

I guess he saw what was coming, for my dander was up now, and he beats it towards the front entrance before I can answer more. After that I sat there, keeping my eye on the revolving door until I thought I'd grow dizzy. It was about an hour and a half later, and about half the population of the city must have passed through when I saw the figure I was waiting for. Though she was still white, Gracie girl was carrying herself in a new way, even if her uncle was behind her. As they reached the elevator she cast one smile at me—and I'll tell the universe it was some smile!—and then started to tap with that fan of hers. For a second I was puzzled, and then I grabs my pencil and begins to write down dots and dashes. When I got through it looked something like this:

— . . . — . . . — — — — . . . . .  
.. . — .

And believe me, dearies, I wasn't long reaching the telegraph operator. "Translate that for me, Jimmy," I says. He took it and then started to grin. "Why," he says, "it means 'Just married!'"

That will describe my little lot a week from to-day, dearies. And if you should hear a tapping on your windows, you'll know it's Gertie sending you a kiss across the U. S. A.



## THE SUNSHOWER

**I**T didn't seem at all like rain, so bright the sun was shining,  
As drops fell down with little thuds upon the emerald meads;  
And so I thought a cloudlet fair, the golden day adorning,  
Perchance the string had broken when it went to tell its beads!

ANTOINETTE DE COURSEY PATTERSON.



# The Importance of Being Pretty

By Paul Hervey Fox

Author of "Philanderer's Progress," "Simon," etc.



TWO miles away the wharves of the coast town made a faint, irregular pattern, and in the sunlight of the cool spring morning the pleasure yacht, *Hesper*, lay upon idle waters. Mr. Cabot, her owner, had finished his late and leisurely breakfast, and now went briskly over the side to the dory. Here one sailor rested upon his oars, while another stood by with the painter in his hand, engaged in keeping the gunwale close.

Sitting stiffly on the hard rear seat, Mr. Cabot put up his hand in dignified salute to his family and guests, who surveyed his departure in a group from the rail. In a few minutes he was only a dancing speck on the level floor of blue which stretched, taut and shining, to a shore of miniature gray buildings.

Mr. Cabot had made money, a good deal of money, in fact, before he was forty-five, and it is one of the privileges of wealth to surround itself like a medieval baron with such jesters and retainers as are desired. Mr. Cabot's tastes in this regard were extremely simple: he preferred familiar faces to new ones. On this vacation interlude he had with him only his wife; his old friend, Robert Mainwaring; his daughter, Rosamund; and his niece, Florence Brace.

As he slowly disappeared from sight, the cluster at the rail broke up into individuals with individual concerns. Mrs. Cabot, a gray-haired woman with an

alert manner, went down to her cabin to write letters. Robert Mainwaring, a very tall, thin old man with a voyaging mind, sat down in a steamer chair near by, and reflectively packed a pipe. The girls, the two cousins, remained standing where they were.

"I wish father would bring back some men," said Rosamund Cabot with a yawn.

She was extremely pretty and wore sports clothes effectively. Her hair, knotted up after a fashion of her own, accented the best characteristics of a well-modeled head. She had a little bundle of mannerisms, and the ability to look frail and unprotected. That impression was not conquered by her flippancies.

Her cousin, Florence, though she was no taller, missed the same effect in some intangible way. Florence had clear features, if they were analyzed, but analysis was always necessary. A tall, sturdy-seeming girl with a dignified manner and limpid eyes, she appeared to be somehow responsible for her own lack of definite good looks.

"Well, he is bringing back Mr. Marsh," she observed sedately.

"Oh, Ellis Marsh doesn't count. You've never met him, have you?"

"No. What is he like?"

Rosamund chuckled in recollection.

"Oh, you'll love him. Every one does. Father knew him in college, where he was pretty fast. He's an old bachelor, you know. And he always

contradicts everything you say. It's his idea of conversation. But then he's as old as father. When I said men, I meant, of course, young men."

Florence touched her lip with her finger, a habit that she had.

"Do you always think of men?" she asked quietly.

"Yes. Don't you?" Rosamund flung at her with careless good humor, as, concealing another yawn, she strolled off to the main cabin for a book.

Florence Brace gazed after her almost reproachfully. She sauntered up to the bow where Hansen, one of the sailors, was arranging a coil of rope. Mr. Mainwaring, who had not moved from his chair, heard her timid, respectful voice, asking matter-of-fact questions concerning channels and sand bars.

Mr. Mainwaring had often been a detached spectator of other people's lives. He was attracted by Rosamund's grace, and amused at her unscrupulous coquetry. But Florence Brace recalled to him his dead wife, who had been just such another timid woman, a good woman, practical and simple-hearted. He indulged in the thought that perhaps Florence belonged to an older generation, a generation, alas, which was fading into faintness. No doubt the Rosamunds, with their sharp wits, their sports clothes, their general air of healthy aggression, were the emblems of the newer order.

Mr. Mainwaring sighed, regretting the good old days which would never come again.

It was late in the afternoon before Mr. Cabot returned to the *Hesper*. He had promised to fetch his friend, Ellis Marsh, shortly after luncheon, and by the time he actually arrived, every one except Florence Brace appeared as bored as possible.

The interest in his return was doubled by the fact that three men instead of two clambered out of the rocking

dory. Rosamund had spied the third from far off, and established the fact of his comparative youth with a pair of binoculars. With a cry of delight she snapped her fingers, and pirouetted down the gangway into her cabin. Florence, in her plain, practicable dress, did not move, but her eyes studied the approaching dory wistfully.

Ellis Marsh, pink, mustached, and exceedingly dapper, scrambled on deck, and in a minute was involved in handshakes and a chorus of greetings. He had the infectious chuckle and knowing air of the gay old dog.

"My dear lady!" he exclaimed, bowing to Mrs. Cabot. "Rosamund, you vixen, have you been true to me? Miss Brace, I'm delighted to know you. Come along, Guy, and meet three pretty girls."

Mrs. Cabot accepted the compliment of inclusion archly, and shook hands with a young man directly behind her husband. He had a quizzical, humorous face, and the air of a slightly spoiled child. He looked clever yet innocuous.

"My second cousin—is that the right relationship, dear boy?—Guy Heron," Ellis Marsh announced with a wave of his arm.

Florence gave him formal greeting, but Rosamund confronted him with active, skeptical eyes, and the ghost of a provocative smile on her lips. Heron caught the look, and grinned rather shyly.

"Run away, you three; I want to talk to Mrs. Cabot," Ellis Marsh concluded. "And be nice to this boy, Rosie. He's a poet, with a play due on Broadway in the fall."

Florence Brace found herself walking by Guy Heron's side with her thoughts vaguely troubled. She heard him comment upon their cruise in an agreeable, rather diffident voice, and heard, too, her cousin's light, challenging answer. She had liked this man's face and tall, ungainly figure at first

view, and wished to escape and reconstruct them in her mind. But first she must look at him hard once or twice more. She did this covertly, and in the same instant discovered that he owned an oddly attractive smile, a smile of authentic charm. The words of Ellis Marsh echoed in her mind. A poet! What were poets like? Somehow this man did not resemble the vain, silly fellow of tradition.

She saw Rosamund climb up toward the bow, and turn her head with a glance which appealed for help. Catching her arm, Guy Heron awkwardly responded. Florence tugged herself up after them a little clumsily, and was both relieved and hurt to realize that neither of them had noticed. What did one say to poets, what did one say?

"Isn't the sea beautiful to-day?" she asked suddenly in a voice with a hush in it.

Heron gave it a nervous glance.

"Great!" he returned without enthusiasm.

"Why," Rosamund queried reflectively, "does one always hate the scenery that other people point out from cars and things? I don't mean you, Florence, I was merely thinking. I suppose it's because you feel they own it. I always own sunsets myself."

"You bet! So do I!" Guy Heron agreed heartily.

Rosamund rambled on in her inconsequential, irrelevant manner.

"Why don't you tuck your legs up like a crane or something—I'm not making puns on your name yet—but you do look so uncomfortable. Or is it monkeys?"

She held her head on one side with her profile shown at an alluring, indifferent angle. Florence knew it for a trick, and felt a little gust of anger. She wanted to know this man, she wanted him to know her, and here was her cousin making him dance for a bag of vanities which she paraded be-

fore every sophomore. She heard Heron answer with confidence; his first shyness seemed already wearing away; and Florence caught that sound of pleased laughter which Rosamund knew so well to draw from men with her commingled insults and flatteries. Sensible of being ignored, Florence took the lead boldly.

"Do you know, Mr. Heron, you're the first poet I ever met, and you don't talk at all the way I imagined poets do."

Heron looked at her with gray eyes which were uncomfortably bright.

"Gee, I can talk that way, too! But honestly, do you think you'd like it? Listen: on this blue and burning day one's spirit stirs to secret harmonies, to the flutter of invisible wings, making sweet holiday, making havoc of dead hopes. Is that what you mean? Good heavens! How I hate arty people. Gosh, if any one talked to me like that I'd want to slug him a good one just for luck!"

Florence looked at him a little bewilderedly, and Rosamund turned the topic.

"Oh, look at the others! What is Ellis Marsh telling them? It must be interesting. I'm tired of being a child. Let's go and listen."

She scrambled down to the deck, and Florence and Guy followed her. Ellis Marsh, in a comfortable chair, had been asked about his health, and was cheerfully engaged in describing his most recent operation. Mrs. Cabot and old Robert Mahwaring looked eager, interested, and unhappy, as they both meant to burst into simultaneous experiences of their own the very second that Marsh was through.

"Well, this feller was a good surgeon, no doubt of it. But, sir, when he whisked off that bandage, and the cut hadn't healed—"

All at once Florence looked at Guy Heron. He was gripping the rail with fingers which were quite white. His

lips were bloodless. He was gazing at Marsh with an air of fascinated horror. The account of knives and surgical wounds continued. Guy Heron wavered perceptibly. His eyelids trembled, then he put out a groping hand, caught gratefully the arm which Florence instantly extended to him, and managed to move slowly toward the stern. Rosamund wheeled and went after them, while their unobservant elders unrolled the record of their physical disasters. Heron sank down upon a chair in the stern. His knees seemed to crumple up under him.

"I know you think I'm a—think I'm an awful fool. But I shouldn't have listened. Those things always affect me like that. Is there—I'd like a glass of water."

Florence whipped a pillow deftly under his head, and received a glance which thanked her adequately. She sped toward the galley with a beating heart.

Rosamund remained, facing the man in silence.

"I suppose you think I'm an ass," he said at last in a voice which was very weary.

"I certainly do!" said Rosamund with quiet conviction.

He started, staring at her indignantly.

"You don't know—you haven't any idea—I get faint——"

"You mean you let yourself get faint," Rosamund murmured with a contempt for which her next inflections apologized. "Oh, I'm not callous. I know about things like that. But you can fight them, you know. If you really want to, of course. If—if you have the courage."

Florence had arrived with the glass of water. The man took it from her with a vague acknowledgment, sipped it, and put it down, never removing his eyes from Rosamund.

"You're pretty darned cruel," he mur-

mured. "That's a hard thing to say to any one."

"It's because I really understand the thing that I say it. Why, I know you could get up and beat me in a race down the deck right now!"

"I—I tell you——"

"Coward!" she taunted with a laugh which took away the sting.

He was on his feet in an instant, raced after her, and distanced her, passing her amidships.

"You see," she said breathlessly, when she had reached his side, "you can, if you want to. I think you're splendid! I do, really!"

The voice with which he mocked himself in answer was tremulous, like a boy's, with unconcealed pleasure.

Florence joined them slowly. She felt that she disliked her cousin very much indeed. Her heart ached with sympathy for the man. Even a cripple would have reacted to Rosamund's bitter sneer. Heron was undoubtedly hiding what he felt. Then Rosamund gave her her opportunity.

"Goodness gracious, look at the time," she said with a glance at her wrist watch. "Dinner's only fifteen minutes away. I'm going to run."

Rosamund never made long farewells, and in a moment Florence found herself alone with Guy Heron. She wondered if he appreciated women whose simple appeal was permanent, who were not forever dancing between mirror and powder puff.

"I know what faintness is," she said gravely, after a slight pause. "It's really terrible. I used to be that way, too. The sight of blood, you know, was awful to me."

Guy's face underwent a change; he looked suddenly somber again; and his acquiescence was pitched in a corresponding key. Presently the conversation lagged. Silences, which were not packed with an elemental significance, fell heavily between them. It occurred

to Florence that he was really shy, after all. She gave a lame excuse, and demurely followed Rosamund's example.

At the companionway she turned her head, unable to fight a sharp curiosity. Was he looking after her? He had dropped into a chair and, with clasped hands caught between his knees, was gazing out upon the darkening face of the waters in a profound abstraction.

Florence moved on toward her cabin with a sense of depression. Her mind, usually so peaceful, began to revolve numbly a number of astonishing ideas.

"Decorate the table, please!" Rosamund demanded, and patted her hair with an adroit hand.

Mr. Cabot and his wife, Guy Heron, and the two girls were grouped about the round table in the main cabin with a litter of poker chips and cards before them.

Guy Heron, whose deal it was, tossed out his delayed ante with a mixture of guilt and irritation. He sent a flying glare at Rosamund which she returned with an impudent grin.

Robert Mainwaring and Ellis Marsh occupied two roomy wickers in the corner of the cabin; they seemed to have taken a fancy to each other's talk. The murmur of their voices as they argued about their avocations made a pleasant, droning accompaniment to the game.

Dinner was long since over; it was nearly ten o'clock. Guy Heron, sitting next to Florence, played like a duffer. He was forever drawing to a pair of deuces or raising Mr. Cabot's pat hand. He had bought twice already. Florence Brace gave forth, from time to time, dim, consolatory little murmurs. She sighed when he tossed chip after chip into a big pot only to lose the hand by a high-card precedence. Guy was scowling and looking bored.

Rosamund was playing as well as he was badly; and now for the first time she began to take an interest in his

game. As he laid down his hand after a futile play, she scoffed at him tactlessly.

"You drew to an inside straight, and then tried to bluff it out."

She shook her head with pursed, mocking lips, and Guy winced. He began to frown in concentration, to study his cards, and to play safe. Presently he won a pot, and flushed at Rosamund's, "Good! You see you can play if you want to."

He began to work in honest earnest. His previous, private reflection that to be skillful at cards argued a mediocre mind vanished before the desire to show this taunting girl that his failure hitherto had been merely indifference. When, at eleven o'clock, the game was over, Florence's murmurs of sympathy had ceased, for he had won back his losses and topped them with a little gain. He rose from the table with every evidence of satisfaction.

Mr. Cabot was struggling with the intricacies of the bank, and Florence moved over near Guy.

"Did you ever feel sometimes as if you had lived before?" she asked in a far-away voice; "as if you'd known certain people and places in some other age?"

"Why—er—yes, I guess so," Guy returned doubtfully. "That is—well I suppose—"

Rosamund had reached them. She interrupted the discussion with brazen confidence.

"Let's take a turn on deck."

With a baffled, humiliated sensation, Florence accompanied them silently. She felt as if she had become all at once an involuntary chaperon. The night lay darkly about them; neither stars nor moon illumined the vast gloom of the skies. In the gossiping breeze they strode up and down the deck of the *Hesper* as she rode gently upon swelling waters.

Florence's mind seemed dull and wan-



dering. Faintly she caught the sense of what the man was saying. He was outlining an idea for some play or other, and the words tumbled over his lips mingled with confusing terms.

"I don't like the second act," Rosamund said crisply all at once. "Why should that man appear again? It spoils the husband's plea. You could kill him off in the first act, I think."

"Ye-es," Guy agreed grudgingly with a cigarette halfway to his lips. "Perhaps you're right. I'll think it over, anyway. What do you think?" he ended, turning to Florence.

"I think it's wonderful!" said she.

He gave her a quick, pleased glance. The sound of talk and laughter reached their ears as the group from the cabin emerged upon deck.

"Oh, Florence," said Rosamund, "I don't want to go to bed yet. Let's row over with them. Father, may we go with them in the dory?"

Mr. Cabot turned his grizzled, beaked face with its wide, firm mouth toward his daughter.

"The dory won't hold you all."

"I know what! Mr. Heron and Florence and I can go over in the dinghy. That will be fun. And look, the water's perfectly calm."

"Well——" Mr. Cabot grumbled.

"Thank you, father," said Rosamund. Mr. Cabot laughed.

"You're a bit premature, Rosie. But then you always were. Now mind! When you come back, no noise, no playing the victrola, or such cuttings-up! I slept badly last night, and want to make it up to-night."

"Yes, father," said Rosamund dutifully.

The dinghy was successfully launched, and Guy Heron shipped his oars.

"How did you know I wanted to row?" he asked.

"Oh, it's good for you," said Rosamund coolly. "I'm sure you don't get

enough exercise. You do look awfully lazy, you know."

The *Hesper* faded like smoke into the enviroing blackness and the dinghy headed for the few dim lights which picked out the town. But Guy rowed erratically, and a heavy tide increased the irregularity of their progress. Silently Florence lifted another oar, and trailing it over the stern, managed to hold them to a definite direction.

"I'm glad this boat doesn't leak," Guy exclaimed presently. "I can't swim a stroke."

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself," said Rosamund scornfully.

"I think you're about the rudest girl I ever met," he answered bluntly.

"And I think you're about the most affected and self-indulgent man."

They glowered at each other, and all at once, for some unaccountable reason, began to laugh at the same time.

Florence, silently guiding the improvised rudder, heard no more of their talk. A dull rage filled her heart. Men were such fools! Of course this man couldn't be expected to see through Rosamund's transparent trickeries, her deft little scorns designed to spur him into pursuit. And to Rosamund he was surely no more than a diversion. She would forget him in two days, Florence decided, if he were to disappear. That was what made it so unfair.

She admitted with a sigh that she wasn't as clever as Rosamund, but she congratulated herself on the possession of a superior capability, and the virtues of sympathy and loyalty. How could Guy Heron be made to perceive this fundamental difference? How could he be made to see Rosamund separated from her toilet table, her pretty little caprices, her essential social background?

At that instant a few sentences that Hansen, the sailor, had told her that morning about the peculiarities of the coast fell idly into her mind. Almost

before she was conscious that she planned to do so, she swung the oar, which she was holding, to a new, sharp angle. Neither Rosamund nor Guy appeared aware of their altered course.

Some twenty minutes later they crept into a minor estuary and glided toward a fringe of rocky beach.

"Hello!" said Rosamund. "Where are we, anyway? Here's a shore, but I can't see any lights at all."

Florence controlled her voice with an effort.

"It's a little peninsula. There's a path on it that leads right into the town. I thought it would make a shorter distance for us to row back. Do you know the country around here, Mr. Heron?"

"First time I've ever been here in my life. I'm at Ellis Marsh's only for a visit of a few days."

"Then I'd better show you the path, if I can find it myself," said Florence.

They beached the dinghy, and Florence was the last to leave. Rosamund and Guy climbed up the shore in the murky air toward a thicket of tangled trees. Florence leaned hard on the prow of the dinghy, and then pushed with all her might. The next moment she moved breathlessly after the two vague shapes on the shore.

After five minutes' struggle they seemed to have made no great headway. The woods grew thicker and more impenetrable.

"Funny path of yours, Florence!" Rosamund declared.

Florence halted dead.

"I'm awfully sorry. I've made a silly mistake. I remember now that this isn't the peninsula Hansen pointed out. This is the island next to it. And there's no one living on it."

She wondered if her foolish voice had betrayed her, but was reassured by Guy's good-humored laugh. They struck back toward the beach, and Florence did not dare look at that which she

wanted to look at most. She gazed obstinately skyward, and received the information she desired from Guy.

"Where the dickens did we leave that boat?" he demanded.

She threw one hurried glance at the swirling eddies of the tide.

"Great Scott! It's gone!" Guy cried. "And this—this is an island? Why didn't I haul that boat up on the beach? We'll have to stay here all night!"

With tight lips and a pounding heart, Florence stood quietly by his side. Grim anticipation occupied her thoughts, nor was this dispelled by Rosamund's cheerful exclamation:

"What fun! I wouldn't have missed this for anything. Why, we're castaways!"

At Rosamund's suggestion Guy refrained from a loud halloo.

"Why wake up father?" she said. "Besides if you did, which I doubt, it would spoil a fine adventure. Think of what fun this will be to tell them to-morrow."

He roamed around the beach, picking up driftwood, for luckily he had a box of safety matches. Presently he managed to make a roaring fire, and scrape away the leaves and twigs beside it. His coat and vest did service as covering for the two girls, and Guy lay down close to the fire, toasting on one side and freezing on the other.

It was long before Florence fell asleep. Visions of the next day straggled before her eyes, visions of Rosamund, haggard and snappy, and of herself, calm, poised, serene, a rock of solid worth. Rosamund's artificial charm would surely be corroded by this acid test.

When, however, she did awaken, a dismal wind was whipping beneath a gray sky, and the cold embers of the fire had a melancholy aspect. Near by with his head under his arm Guy Heron lay blinking. Florence watched him sullenly.

"Where's your cousin?" he asked suddenly.

Florence was aware for the first time of Rosamund's absence. Then her eyes traveled toward the beach, and took in the figure of Rosamund approaching them, Rosamund insultingly pink and fresh and blithe.

"I've been for a swim," she announced when she reached them. "It was fine. Why don't you go in, Guy?"

"Me? On a cold morning like this?"

"I forgot. Naturally you're afraid of anything uncomfortable."

"It isn't a matter of fear, it's——"

The colloquy ended by Guy's growling departure. He returned chuckling, clear-eyed, and tingling with pleasure from the plunge.

"How would you like a nice poem for breakfast?" he demanded, picking up wood for a fire.

"I'd prefer eggs," Rosamund informed him.

When the fire was large enough to be of service, Guy's first act was to step down to the shore, and bawl through cupped hands at the tiny shape that was the *Hesper*. It was only after his voice had gone hoarse that he realized he might as well have hummed.

Florence beheld the results of that attempt with sharp satisfaction. She moved quietly away, and went into the thicket to seek for better sleeping quarters. Another night like the last one, after a starvation day, would undoubtedly produce the results for which she hoped. She did not grudge Rosamund the present, being very sure that the future was hers.

Meanwhile Guy had unearthed a pitiful little penknife which acted as a weight for his watch chain. Under Rosamund's suggestion he began to cut the tenderest shoots and the tips of branches, and to strew them beside the fire as bedding.

"Of course," she said, "we'll be away

by noon, but it's just as well to be prepared."

Attempting to reach the swaying branch of a sapling, Guy stumbled over a log embedded in the undergrowth.

"I've got it!" he cried. "I can't swim, but I can hang on to this and trust to luck and the tide to carry me in to the town."

Rosamund paid him sweet tribute.

"You're really clever, aren't you?"

With the aid of a dry, knotted limb he managed to pry the great log loose. The task of rolling it down to the beach was more than he had bargained for in the way of obstacles. Stones interrupted its course, and these had to be tugged from the earth until his finger nails were blunted or broken. He worked manfully, the veins standing out on his forehead from the unaccustomed effort. At last the final obstacle was surmounted; the log plunged down an incline of rock, and fell splashing into shallow water. Guy waded in after it impatiently, and then found that the hand which rested ever so lightly upon it was submerged at the least pressure. He turned a blank, ludicrously woeful face toward Rosamund.

"It's water-logged! It wouldn't hold a rat!" he declared in despair.

Florence had appeared for the last stages of his struggle.

"What a shame!" she observed. "Oh, you did work so hard!"

But Rosamund, still pink and fresh looking from her early bath, sank down upon the nearest rock and laughed.

"I'm sorry. I—I really can't help it. But you did look so funny!"

"All right!" said Guy angrily. "I'll show you yet. I'm not through by a darn sight."

Rosamund gave him an odd, inscrutable smile.

"I'm so hungry," she complained. "I think I'll go and sleep. It must be nearly one o'clock. When I wake up,

you can surprise me with your newest invention." She yawned, and curled herself up like a kitten on the green leaves. Guy stared at her with unfathomable eyes.

He wandered back to the beach and, sitting down, was soon lost in thought. But his mind seemed singularly barren. In his depression he began to scratch the sand with a stick.

Florence was sitting near him. He had been tormented by Rosamund. Very well; he would perceive by contrast how self-effacing, how sympathetic, she could be. He scrawled figures in the sand for a long time, and then the twig broke off short in his fingers. Instantly he found himself presented with another.

"Oh, er—thank you," he said awkwardly, and for the first time became self-conscious. He began to talk with an air of making conversation; Florence gathered from the look in his eyes that the strain was telling on him. She put her hand up and touched her hair, wondering whether it was as matted as it felt. She derived some consolation from the thought that Rosamund's would surely look worse.

And the first thing she saw, when Rosamund, refreshed by her slumber, joined them on the beach, was Rosamund's hair lowered in long, careless plaits which made her immeasurably seductive. It was the right, final touch, the ultimate instinct of taste.

"Hello, Brunhilde!" said Guy, displaying the first enthusiasm he had shown since he had sat down. "You haven't any food in your pockets, have you?"

"No; and I'm not hungry. I guess I've reached the numb state."

"How would you like a tall, cool glass of milk?" Guy asked with a grin.

"Almost as much as you'd like a very thick, tender, juicy steak with mushrooms and melted butter, and—"

"Stop!" cried Guy. "I take back the milk."

Florence surveyed her cousin coldly, and bit her lip. She told herself that she would outstay Rosamund's surprising endurance if it killed her. Her virtues should be made manifest if she had to suffer agonies before Rosamund's spirit was broken.

At present Rosamund seemed the only one who was not seriously aware of the hazards of their situation. Guy Heron glanced thoughtfully at the dim, white shape of the *Hesper*, so near, yet so impossibly removed.

"What will your father say?" he asked presently.

"Oh, he'll say, 'Confound the girl!' and go off and write some telegrams to his partners. Father never worries if he trusts you. That's one of the nice things about him."

It was in the neighborhood of noon that a welcome sound fell upon their ears: the choleric sputter of some small motor boat. Guy rushed to the beach and yelled in the wisp of a voice which remained to him. He danced, waved his arms, and behaved like a maniac.

Some one in the motor boat waved back pleasantly; a little arm, no bigger than the strand of a spider web, was visible across that shimmering space of water; Guy could almost visualize a bland, smiling face behind it. With a groan of despair he tumbled to the ground. Rosamund laughed with weak hysteria behind him.

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear! I don't know why I'm laughing. I'm sure it's no laughing matter."

Guy fumbled for his last cigarette, lighted it, and drew the smoke into his lungs gratefully. He put the box of matches down beside him on the rock. Florence slipped her hand quietly over them. A few minutes later she walked down to a hidden arm of the cove, and threw the matches far out into the water.

That night was a wretched ordeal for all three. That her father had dis-

covered the empty dinghy by this time, and concluded they had been drowned was Rosamund's secret distress.

Yet, when Guy announced in the evening that he had somehow lost his matches, and they could have no fire, she took the statement with lightness.

Dull clouds gathered in an ominous sky and, with the fall of dark, a drenching rain came down mercilessly. There was no question of sleep. They sat close together, silent now in their mutual misery. Florence, with lips compressed in a bitter line, possessed herself in morose patience, waiting for Rosamund to go to pieces.

The rain ceased after midnight, and in their damp clothing they dozed fitfully. Florence woke shivering at dawn, and Guy was already up. As usual there was no sign of Rosamund. They waited half-an hour for her appearance, and then set out to seek her.

Florence, at last, had her awaited hour. Weak and weary as she was, her heart jumped with triumph as she beheld, lying face downward on the slope of beach, a pathetic figure silently sobbing. Rosamund had quite surely gone to pieces. Florence raised her eyes heavily toward Guy; but he was not cognizant of that glance.

Some latent strength, as yet in reserve, he now managed to call forth, and he broke into a run. He lifted Rosamund from where she lay and, unabashed by the presence of her cousin, comforted her with his arms about her.

"You're the pluckiest thing I ever saw," he said in a whispery voice. "Yes, and the prettiest! Buck up! Just a little longer. I'll get you out of this mess to-day, or die!"

Some nerve seemed to snap in Florence under that dismal outcome of all her efforts. She leveled a finger at them like some ancient witch and sobbed:

"You—the two of you—I hate you both! You think you know everything. Well, this really is a peninsula. The

path is along that left bank. I'm—I'm going into town!"

And with that denunciation, so curiously like a small girl's illogical taunt, she went slowly up the heights and disappeared from view.

Guy had helped Rosamund to her feet, and was helping her now to forge ahead laboriously. But they were not thinking of Florence.

On the wide veranda of Ellis Marsh's old home, Mr. Marsh himself was engaged in a discussion with Mainwaring.

"So Cabot's niece has gone home, eh?" Marsh asked. "Left quite suddenly, didn't she? I suppose that experience on the spit of land out there was a bit too much for her."

"Yes, I'm sorry to say. She was a sweet thing," Mr. Mainwaring murmured with a sentimental air. "I have several times thought that it might have been better if that young cousin of yours, Heron, had taken up with her instead of Rosamund. An impractical man of that type needs a capable rather than a merely decorative girl."

Ellis Marsh put his fingers together and contradicted the statement from sheer force of habit.

"I don't agree with you there. A girl like Cabot's daughter is more likely to develop the boy by demanding more of him. And as for being capable, a girl who knows how to make herself pretty is fairly sure to know how to do a number of other things as well. Pretty girls are often more capable than plain ones."

"Nonsense," retorted Mr. Mainwaring with a touch of asperity. "But still"—his eyes strayed down the road to where two figures slowly drew into sight—"they make a pleasant couple to look at, in any case."

Ellis Marsh followed the direction of his guest's eyes, as he considered a reply to his last statement. But not even force of habit could make him deny anything so obvious.



# In Broadway Playhouses

By Dorothy Parker

## Exit the Season, Laughingly

IT would seem as if everything were about over, including such shouting as might be thought worthy of mention. The season for serious plays has swung quietly closed; while the season for revues and what have been called, for want of a better name, musical comedies, is once again wide open. Erring husbands, wives who want to live their own lives, polished villains, historical characters, and murderers whose identity is not revealed until three minutes to eleven, are laid carefully away, as if in camphor. There is a welcome for only those non-musical plays whose plots concern the gentleman that finds himself, through no fault of his own, in the same bedroom with the beauteous stranger in the pink charmeuse pajamas.

The critics have, as is customary, presided at the closing ceremonies of the antesummer season. It is difficult to reason out just how the thing started, and just why it is still kept going, but there is evidently some rule existing which makes it compulsory for every dramatic critic to sit down and compile a neatly arranged list of what he considers the ten best plays and the ten most notable individual performances of the year. It may be that there is something in the Constitution of these, loosely speaking, United States, to this

effect; I have always meant to look it up and see, but what with one thing and another, one does fall behind with one's reading so. In any event, you can't hope to rate as a regular reviewer unless you give out a list to a panting public.

Personally, I have never been quite able to grasp the value of the idea, but let it not be said of me that I am not a slave to the conventions. If the thing to do is to list the ten best plays, I shall be there, accompanied by the tintinnabulation of the proverbial bells. And, for all the fuss made of it, the actual labor involved amounts to virtually nothing. All that there is to it is to write down "The Tavern" ten times, and consider it a job well done.

The listing of the ten outstanding individual performances requires more time and trouble, but I have so much of both on my hands that no real obstacle is presented.

Looking leisurely back over the season, the performances which stand out in highest relief are those of the lyricist who rhymed "license" and "five cents," in "The Right Girl;" the lady who stood against a curtain and had magic lantern slides thrown upon her, in "The Midnight Rounders of 1921;" the little girl of six years who was taken, by her doting mother, to attend



a *matinée* of "Diff'rent"; the grass-plot, in "Nice People;" the nail file used as a dagger, in "Nemesis;" the gentleman who held a cigar in his mouth while Fred Stone cut it in two with a whip, in "Tip-Top;" Margot Kelly's hair, in "Deburau;" the fountain, in "Clair de Lune," faithfully copied from the one which the dentist indicates when he says to you, "Now rinse, please;" and the two small dogs, one of whom impersonated a camel and the other an elephant, in the Winter Garden show.

To one and all of these are tendered the heartfelt thanks of the present writer for the part they have played in making the theatrical season of 1920-21 ever a memorable one.

And now that that is all over with for another year, we might as well begin on the advance guard of summer musical offerings. The logical place to start is at the top, with "The Last Waltz," the new Oscar Straus operetta, at the Century Theater.

"The Last Waltz" has just about everything that its contemporary musical entertainments lack—a charming score, good singers, and a Heaven-sent comedian. I am not one who, as a rule, is apt to run a temperature over Viennese operettas. I am willing to concede them as much as you like with regard to the music, for I know one really ought to like that, and if my own taste runs more to the Jerome Kern school, that is my hard luck. But when the orchestra ceases, and the book holds full sway—that is when I drop out. Show me a comic opera with its scene laid in some mythical kingdom in the Balkans, and its chorus men dressed in Hussar uniforms, and I'll show you a comic opera in which the big laughing scene occurs when the *Captain of the Guard* simulates intoxication, and falls over his sword. Thus it is that when the conversation turns to Viennese comic opera, and those about me begin

letting themselves go on the subject, I steal softly toward the door, and let myself out into the soothing stillness of the night.

The book of "The Last Waltz" is pretty much along the lines of the books of the Viennese operettas that have gone before. It would have been heavy going had not the management engaged James Barton for the comedian's rôle. He makes of it the most gorgeously funny part that the musical comedy stage has known this season, and I'm not overlooking Leon Errol's rôle in "Sally," either. There are those—and if I must mention names, theirs is legion—who insist that Mr. Barton is entirely out of the picture, who shed chaste tears over the fact that his methods are all out of keeping with the atmosphere of the operetta. It is true that Mr. Barton's comedy is approximately as Viennese in spirit as the Dooley Brothers' vaudeville act, but—though I think, myself, the word to use is "therefore"—it is wholly gratifying. His feet, modestly shod in some one's cast-off number twelves, are inspired. It is an imposition to keep dragging in my personal feelings in the matter, but I would rather see him do a fragment of his skating dance than watch all the *alumnæ* of the Duncan and Denishawn schools give a joint recital. And now that I've said that, it doesn't look half strong enough.

But the management has gone even farther toward doing the handsome thing by "The Last Waltz." It has got Eleanor Painter to sing the leading rôle, and, whereabouts at least, it is practically impossible to do more for a composer of comic opera. And besides her delightful voice, it is no strain at all to keep looking at her. Walter Woolf, who plays opposite her, sings even better than he did last year in the revival of "Florodora," though he seems still to have the same difficulty in disposing of his hands. This makes two people who

can sing in one production. Doubtless you think I am exaggerating, but I can only urge you to prove the truth of the statement for yourself by going to "The Last Waltz." I would urge you to go to it, in any case.

The cast includes several enthusiastic dancers, and an array of highly decorative blond young ladies, headed by Beatrice and Marcella Swanson, the prides of Worcester, Massachusetts, which jumped into fame overnight for being their home town. The piece has been set with an impressive disregard for expense.

Of the other musical shows now holding the boards, as we colloquists put it, there is nothing much to say. You could sum them up with the words, "Well, yes and no," with perhaps a shade of stress on the "no."

There is, for instance, "Phoebe of Quality Street," which is Barrie's "Quality Street" set to music. Unfortunately they didn't stop with setting it to music. It has been a rough year, on this side of the water, for Sir James. What with the critics pelting his "Mary Rose" with showers of overripe raspberries, and what with the things that have been done to his poor, innocent little "Quality Street," it is difficult to see how he can ever smile again. He could, and doubtless did, get over the "Mary Rose" business easily, and well he might; but those who have his interest at heart should organize a league to keep at least one ocean between him and the Shubert Theater.

They have brought over from England a lady named Dorothy Ward to play the title rôle in "Phoebe of Quality Street;" and, considering what a first-class passage costs these days, it seems really staggering to think of the money that could have been saved by the simple means of letting her stay happily at home. It is not all Miss Ward's fault. Things might not have seemed nearly as bad if we had not been keyed

up to expect so much of her. Perhaps, in another sort of part, she might be perfectly corking. But she had been billed, by a hysterical press agent, as "England's greatest comédienne." I don't pretend to be right up to the minute with what is going on upon the British stage, but I can say with perfect safety that if she is England's greatest comédienne, then I'm Mrs. Fiske.

They have also imported a comedian called Shaunt Glenville to add a touch of humor to the proceedings. It is better to say nothing of Mr. Glenville's methods of comedy. One cannot speak of these whiffs of the dead past without breaking down.

Mr. Edward Delaney Dunn—he also adapted the book of "The Last Waltz"—fixed "Quality Street" up for the musical comedy trade. He has intensified the Barrie whimsicalities by introducing a large comic lady who sits upon the comedian's lap, bringing both him and his chair to the floor; by writing in such quaint lines as "That's a dirty trick;" by interpolating a long scene, played by the comedian and a particularly virulent child actress, all about Columbus and George Washington; and by innumerable other sympathetic touches. The music is by one Walter Kollo, spoken of by the papers as a well-known Viennese composer. Taking into consideration all its tunes, you might speak of his score, if you could bring yourself to do it, as Kollo's wild oat.

You keep thinking that "Princess Virtue," the musical comedy by Gitz Rice and B. C. Hilliam which opened at the Central Theater, is going to be better, and so you stay trustingly on to the end. But you lose. It remains just about lukewarm all the way through. Of course, there is Tessa Kosta's voice, and there is Sarah Edwards' voice, and there is Hugh Cameron, a decidedly funny comedian; but even they aren't enough. The music is never more than

not so bad, and the lyrics are innocuous and that's all. The authors have spread themselves on the plot. Never, not even in "The Bat," have I seen such a lavish amount of plot. To this day, I haven't got it straightened out. I know that Sarah Edwards was supposed to be Tessa Kosta's grandmother, but why she didn't divulge her identity, or how the stepfather came in, or where her mother was, or what difference it all made, anyway, I never expect to have cleared up for me.

"Princess Virtue" boasts of—maybe it doesn't do so much boasting, which would be perfectly understandable—an assortment of chorus girls, willing workers, all. When you first see them, you think to yourself, "Ah, they must have been chosen for their voices." But you later find out that it couldn't have been on account of that, either. It is all very strange.

"Two Little Girls in Blue," with the Fairbanks twins playing the title rôle, doesn't go far in the way of comedy. It is, in fact, next to impossible, without straining something beyond repair, to recall a single funny line from it, but it is decidedly easy to watch. When Fred Jackson's book begins to get a little too dull, which occurs about every ten minutes, a wise director has introduced a dance. The Fairbanks twins don't go in much for singing, and never said they did, but their dancing is more delightful than ever. Also, which is a great help to the plot, you simply can't tell one from the other. Also present in the cast are Olin Howland, Oscar Shaw with his permanent smile, Fred Santley, and an exceedingly personable chorus.

It seems as if you must have seen "June Love," now at the Knickerbocker Theater before. "Surely," you think, "I have seen a musical comedy with that name, sometime. Everybody has." And the illusion is not dispelled by going to see it. It is just about like

every musical comedy you ever saw. It is, one must say in all fairness, not so bad; but then, it is only honest to add, it is not so good, either. There is some rather shopworn music by Rudolph Friml, and there are lyrics by Brian Hooker. If Brian Hooker hadn't written them, they would have been decidedly good, but as long as he did write them, they should have been a whole lot better. Else Alder sings and acts the leading rôle pleasantly, while W. B. Davidson, who plays opposite her, has one of those voices which sound so pretty in a canoe. Johnny Dooley is in the cast, but he doesn't fall half often enough to satisfy his admirers. If only he had a few more opportunities to fall flat, the show would not have so many.

There has been one production without music, "Just Married," in so many words. It is a bedroom farce—well, the scene is laid on a steamer, and the bedroom is, therefore, a stateroom, but that is a mere technical quibble. It is the same old farce, with the same old mildly inebriated hero, in the same wrong bed, and the same tearful heroine in the same impractical pink pajamas. Or rather, it would be the same old story, were it not for the presence in the cast of Lynne Overman. He takes that doddering old farce, and by his quiet playing of the hero makes it one of the funniest things that has come to light in months. Vivian Martin, who is just back from the strange country where they take movies, plays the heroine. She is extremely pretty, and that's about all she needs to be, for the part. The rest of the company is composed of the sort of people who always compose the rest of the cast of bedroom farces.

But it might not be too early to suggest that, when the lists of the ten best individual performances are being compiled next year, the compilers give a thought to Mr. Overman, for his acting in "Just Married."

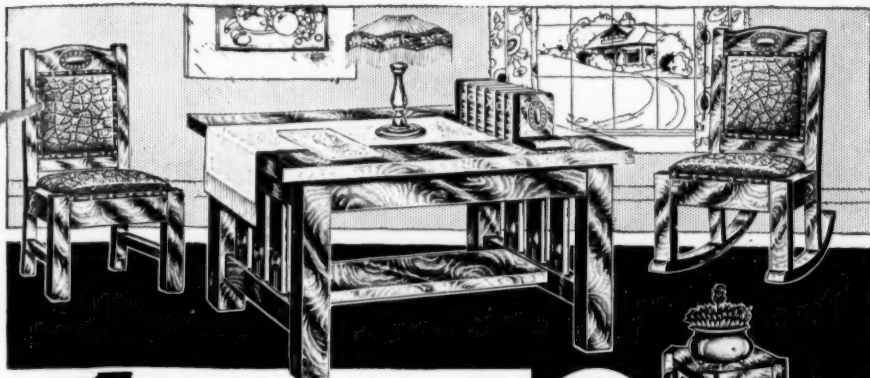
# Talks With Ainslee's Readers

MRS. GRUNDY'S power of utterance being for the nonce dulled by her long tirade on the foibles of the young, the fiction writers have taken over her campaign, and are pushing it, to the edification of the public and the poor, erstwhile-maligned youth of the country. For conservative taste and the older conventions have been, indisputably, on the side of the venerable ex-college president who recently crystallized the horrified parental idea on the subject of jazz and its concomitant vices.

THE youngsters, meanwhile, no whit daunted by the barrage of invective, "toddle" their way serenely, scarce deeming it necessary to defend their highly colored philosophy. And yet, despite the overwhelming weight of the more conservative opinion, there is, as Sir Roger de Coverley wisely observed some years ago, "much to be said on both sides." And the fast-growing preference of magazine readers for the popular tale which recounts the present-day tendencies of the flapper and the ladies of the chorus, of the subdéb and her equally sophisticated sister of the fashionable shop, indicates that the high lights of the much-discussed flapper problem are being properly focused by the fiction writer to catch the public attention. The popular speech, independence of conduct, and dress of the youth of to-day appear, in the fictionized version, as the healthy manifestations of real humor and the thorough Americanism which they actually are, rather than as degrading habiliments borrowed from the lower middle classes. For American youth is to-day proving its capacity for whole-hearted enjoyment of life just as sincerely, and with the same courage,

as not so long ago it proved its ability to cope with and master the more serious aspects of living. And underneath the blaséness with which infant rosebud lips lisp of "hors d'œuvres" and "crème de cacao" and prattle the sweet nothings which constitute that favorite indoor sport called "petting," there is, after all, the same feminine virtue, the same fundamental wholesomeness of the lady, the same maternal qualities, if you will. Witness the young thing who sat next to us in a subway car recently fondling a baby and whispering cuddly things into its fat neck, who, the last time we had seen her, was the second girl from the left in a San Francisco cabaret.

IT is a characteristic of the American public that it enthusiastically subscribes to and indulges "the very latest thing," whether it be in fashions, in politics, or in the social order. Recognizing this tendency, as it affects popular fiction, AINSLEE's is planning for its readers stories which are the last cry in the way of "human-interest" tales. Authors who have their fingers on the public's pulse while it dines and dances, while it shops or merely "loafs," are writing these stories for AINSLEE's readers. So that you will, during the next few months, find in AINSLEE's brisk, up-to-the-minute tales, replete with the present-day youthful exuberance of spirit, from the pens of such experienced writers as Sophie Kerr, Meade Minnegerode, Marie Van Vorst, Oscar Graeve, Marie Beynon Ray, Beatrix Demarest Lloyd, Gilbert Frankau, Helen Bullitt Lowry, and others. If your taste is for distinctive, plotful stories of life as it's lived to-day, then AINSLEE's is the magazine for you.



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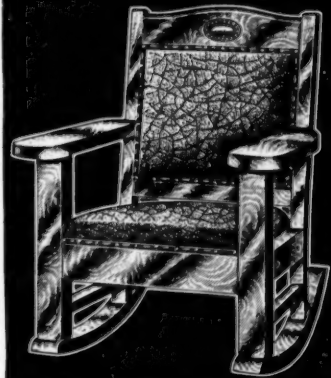
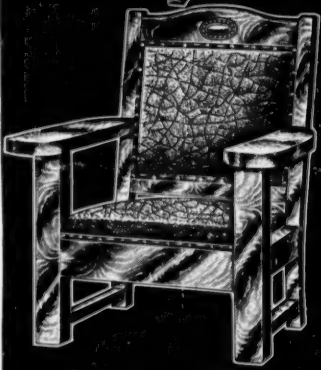
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## Nix on the "Parley-Voo" stuff

A FRIEND of mine.  
WHO COULDN'T speak.  
A WORD of French.  
WENT TO Paris.  
AND THE first time.  
HE HAD to get.  
A HAIRCUT and shave.  
HE PRACTICED an hour.  
MAKING SIGNS.  
IN THE looking glass.  
SO THE French barber.  
WOULD UNDERSTAND him.  
AND THEN he went in.  
AND WIGGLED his fingers.  
THROUGH HIS hair.  
AND STROKED his chin.  
AND THE barber grinned.  
AND FINISHED the job.  
THEN MY friend thought.  
HE'D BE polite.  
SO HE gave the barber.  
AN AMERICAN cigarette.

WHICH THE barber smoked.  
AND MY friend pointed.  
TO HIS mouth.  
AND SAID "Likee voo."  
AND THE barber roared.  
AND SAID "You BET.  
I USED to smoke 'em.  
WHEN I worked.  
IN INDIANAPOLIS.  
AND BELIEVE me.  
THEY SATISFY!"



HERE'S a smoke that talks in any language and needs no interpreter. Light up a Chesterfield, draw deep—and more plainly than words your smile will tell the world "They Satisfy." It's the blend that does it—and you can't get "Satisfy" anywhere except in Chesterfields, for that blend *can't be copied!*

*They Satisfy* **Chesterfield**  
**CIGARETTES**

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